

Customer engagement on Facebook - Case Gasellit

Master's Thesis
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Fall 2016
Corporate Communication

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Title of thesis Customer engagement on Facebook – Case Gasellit		
Degree Master of Science (Economics and Business Administration)		
Degree programme Corporate Communication		
Thesis advisor Pekka Pälli		
Year of approval 2016	Number of pages 89	Language English

Abstract

Objective of the study: The objective of the study was to examine how customer engagement is negotiated between the human brand Gasellit and their followers on the Facebook page of the band during the release of Gasellit's new album. To date, musicians utilizing Facebook for promotional purposes has not attracted much research interest. Earlier studies on human brands demonstrate that celebrities can endorse established consumer brands but do not focus on instances where celebrities endorse themselves. In turn, customer engagement scholars build on the premises of service-dominant (S-D) logic wherein consumers are seen as co-creators of value which emphasizes the interactive nature of service relationships. The leading social media site Facebook is an appropriate platform for initiating customer engagement as it provides both organizations and customers with opportunities for authentic interaction.

Research method: The research method was qualitative. Netnography was applied for the online observation of the Facebook community during the six-month period from September 2015 to February 2016. In addition, a semi-structured interview with Gasellit was conducted in order to gain a deep understanding about the community and the band's use of Facebook.

Findings of the study: The findings of the study reveal that customer engagement on Gasellit's Facebook page is four-fold. Firstly, the community has several conventions that the followers exhibit when communicating on the page. Secondly, customer engagement is centered on two objects, Gasellit and the community per se. Thirdly, customer engagement is negotiated through six engagement processes which all highlight the interactive nature of the relationship between Gasellit and their followers on Facebook. Finally, the engagement processes lead to 16 specific engagement practices some of which originate from the engagement object of Gasellit and some from the engagement object of community. Through these practices, the followers both demonstrate their engagement with Gasellit and interact with other followers in the community on a daily basis.

Keywords customer engagement, Facebook, human brand, corporate brand, service-dominant (S-D) logic, virtual community, netnography

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Työn nimi Asiakkaiden sitoutuneisuuden ilmeneminen Facebookissa – Case Gasellit

Tutkinto Kauppatieteiden maisteri

Koulutusohjelma Corporate Communication

Työn ohjaaja Pekka Pälli

Hyväksymisvuosi 2016

Sivumäärä 89

Kieli englanti

Tiivistelmä

Tutkimuksen tavoite: Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tarkastella asiakkaiden sitoutuneisuuden ilmenemistä ihmisbrändi Gasellien ja heidän seuraajiensa välisenä neuvotteluna yhtyeen Facebook-sivulla uuden albumin julkaisun aikaan. Aiempi tutkimus ei ole riittävässä määrin huomionnut, kuinka muusikot voivat hyödyntää Facebookia heidän uusien albumiensa promootiossa. Ihmisbränditutkimus kuitenkin osoittaa, että julkisuushenkilöt pystyvät edistämään yksittäisten tuotteiden myyntiä. Samaa ilmiötä ei ole silti kyetty selittämään siinä tapauksessa, kun julkisuushenkilöt pyrkivät edistämään oman ihmisbrändinsä myyntiä. Asiakkaiden sitoutuneisuuden tutkimusperinteet kumpuavat palvelulogiikan tutkimuksesta, jossa asiakkaat nähdään tasavertaisina arvonalustajina yritysten rinnalla ja jossa korostetaan palvelusuhteiden vuorovaikutteista luonnetta. Maailman johtava sosiaalisen median sivusto Facebook on erityisen sovelias alusta asiakkaiden sitoutuneisuuden synnyttämiseksi, sillä se tarjoaa sekä organisaatioille että asiakkaille mahdollisuuden autenttiseen viestintään ja vuorovaikutukseen.

Tutkimusmenetelmä: Tutkimus oli luonteeltaan laadullinen. Netnografiaa hyödynnettiin Gasellien Facebook-sivuston havainnointiin kuuden kuukauden tutkimusjaksona syyskuusta 2015 helmikuuhun 2016. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa haastateltiin Gaselleita niin yhteisön yleisen ymmärtämisen kuin yhtyeen Facebookin hyödyntämisen hahmottamisen takeeksi.

Tutkimustulokset: Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että asiakkaiden sitoutuneisuuden ilmeneminen Gasellien Facebook-sivulla voidaan jakaa neljään osatekijään. Yhteisön sisäisessä viestinnässä noudatetaan ensinäkkin muutamia konventioita, jotka toistuvat useissa viesteissä. Toisena huomiona on asiakkaiden sitoutuneisuuden keskittyminen kahteen pääkohteeseen: Gaselleihin ja itse yhteisöön. Kolmas päätelmä osoittaa, että asiakkaiden sitoutuneisuus ilmenee käytännössä kuutena sitoutumisprosessina, jotka korostavat Gasellien ja heidän Facebook-seuraajiensa suhteen vuorovaikutteista luonnetta. Sitoutumisprosesseihin linkittyy lisäksi 16 erityistä käytännettä, joista osa liittyy Gaselleihin ja osa yhteisöllisyyteen. Nämä käytänteet todistavat ensinäkkin, kuinka Gasellien seuraajat ilmentävät sitoutuneisuuttaan Gaselleihin, mutta ne osoittavat myös, kuinka seuraajat viestivät toistensa kanssa yhtyeen Facebook-sivulla.

Avainsanat asiakkaiden sitoutuneisuus, Facebook, ihmisbrändi, yritysbrändi, palvelulogiikka, virtuaalisyhteisö, netnografia

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1. INTRODUCTION

Like many other contemporary musicians, a Finnish rap-quartet Gasellit do not have an official web site. Instead, they utilize social media in all their communications. Of different social media, they have centralized especially on Facebook through which the band informs their followers of upcoming live shows, announces when new music is being released and provides the followers with links in other media. However, that is not all of it. While the textual content of posts is often written in quite a vulgar manner, they spice up the posts even more with pictures of themselves. All this is done consistently. And when the followers begin commenting on the posts, Gasellit takes them into account either by commenting back or liking the comments. This, too, is consistent and purposeful action.

This study explores Gasellit's use of Facebook when promoting their new album, *Seis*, which was released on October 30, 2015. Although all Gasellit's actions relating to the promotion of the new album are in the focus of the thesis, I also aim to gain a close view on general community practices manifested on the band's Facebook page. This is because, for Gasellit, the use of Facebook is an ongoing process not confined only to promotions but also to their overall interactions with the followers.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Put simply, Gasellit's actions that aim at generating customer engagement refer to the phenomenon of branding (cf. Aaker, 1996). The traditional way of thinking about brands relates to product branding, companies' ways of getting consumers to prefer their products over others (Kapferer, 2008, p. 2). Oftentimes product brands operate in a rather narrow range as companies have a number of other products. However, the Gasellit-brand drastically different than any of those. Gasellit is both the company and the brand.

To illustrate brands like Gasellit, Thomson (2006) uses the term *human brand* for living entities that are brands on their own right. Earlier studies on human brands show that human brands can endorse established consumer brands (e.g. Kapferer, 2008), but do not address phenomena where human brands endorse themselves. In addition, some of the past studies demonstrate that people, consumers, can grow attached to human brands (e.g. Fournier, 1998; Click et al., 2013). In other words, earlier research suggests that consumers engage with human brands in the same way as they engage with other human beings.

This all relates to the research practice of customer engagement, which is a more studied phenomenon than human brands. Having been studied since the beginning of this millennium, customer engagement is a fairly new research subject (Brodie et al., 2011). Its core assertion is that engaged customers manifest their engagement through detectable behaviors (e.g. Verhoef et al., 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2010). A good example of the novelty of customer engagement is that, although researchers have reached a consensus on what engaged customers often do such as spread the content they find intriguing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), many studies use different wordings for the phenomenon such as “consumer engagement” (Chu & Kim, 2011), “customer brand engagement” (Hollebeek, 2011), or “fan engagement” (Stavros et al., 2014). In this thesis I emphasize the phenomenon of engagement.

Resulting from the rise of customer engagement, the leading logic in both marketing practice and literature has changed over the past few decades from transactional marketing to relationship marketing. Vargo and Lusch (2004) illustrate this “service-dominant (S-D) logic” by noting that the general focus of marketing practice has shifted from the transaction of tangible resources, manufactured goods, towards the transaction of intangible resources, value co-creation and relationships. In relationship marketing being a customer does not end once the transaction is over but it is indefinite. Accordingly, the shift requires more interaction between a service provider and customers.

To date, musicians utilizing Facebook for initiating customer engagement whilst promoting their music has not attracted much interest among scholars, although eight of the 25

most liked pages on Facebook are of musicians (Trackalytics, 2015). In contrast, greater research traditions have focused on the fan engagement of professional sport clubs, especially in the National Basketball Association (NBA) (e.g. Stavros et al., 2014), or politicians' activity during their campaigns (Thomson, 2006). However, as professional sport clubs are usually managed like large organizations with CEOs, boards of directors, and so forth, and as politicians compete against each other, both traditions are unsuitable to explain the relationships that musicians form with their followers on social media. Therefore, my aim in this thesis is to offer a novel approach for investigating the branding work of musicians for initiating customer engagement on social media whilst promoting themselves.

The position of the present study in the research field of corporate communication relates to Cornelissen's (2014) holistic view of corporate communications. This view echoes the holistic view on branding: Kapferer (2008) poses that in order to make any brand beneficial it must be managed properly; all the functions of an organization need to cooperate for the common goal of making the brand desirable. In Gasellit's case, if they were a large enterprise, among these functions would be sales promotion, advertising and public relations. However, Cornelissen (2014, p. 28) argues that such functions are actually included in the corporate communication function, which compounds all communications of an organization.

The study is conducted on Gasellit's Facebook page which is not only the major communication channel for them but also a pertinent platform for consumers to organize in virtual communities (Zaglia, 2013). Research data consist of all the 68 entries Gasellit posted to their Facebook page during the six-month period from September 2015 to February 2016 and all follower activity the entries initiated in terms of likes, comments and shares. The thesis applies the method of netnography (Kozinets, 2002, 2010) for the online observation of the interactions on the Facebook page. In addition to netnography, a semi-structured interview with Gasellit is used as background information to better understand the band's use of Facebook in customer interactions, but also to gain deep insights on the follower activity as Gasellit are experiencing it.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The study seeks to obtain a close look on how Gasellit's followers demonstrate their engagement on the band's Facebook page. My further aim is to explore how the particular followers react to different kinds of posts. The objectives of the study are approached with the following research problem:

How is customer engagement negotiated between the human brand Gasellit and their followers on the band's Facebook page?

The research problem aims to understand how Gasellit and the followers co-create customer engagement on the band's Facebook page. Furthermore, the research problem is approached with a more specific research question:

How do followers manifest their engagement on Gasellit's Facebook page?

Through the research question I aim to analyze how the followers react to different kinds of posts by Gasellit as well as how they are generally manifesting their engagement on the Facebook page. Ultimately, answering the research question will also provide case-specific practical implications as regards how Gasellit can affect their followers.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

After the introduction, the study continues with a review of relevant literature. The review first discusses earlier research on branding work with the aim to examine how the specific setting of human brands affects an organization's communications. After that, relevant research on customer engagement is presented, focusing especially on service-dominant (S-D) logic, the medium of Facebook, and interactivity related phenomena. Finally, the literature review concludes by presenting the analytical framework of the study.

Following the literature review, the third chapter of the thesis discusses methodological choices. The guiding research method netnography is introduced and the data of the study is explained.

The fourth chapter presents the findings of the study. These are divided into three sub-chapters. The first, immediate reactions to posts, presents the general observations of the activity of the followers during the time period of the study. The second, Gasellit-related behaviors, discusses all the customer engagement behaviors that centralize on the engagement object of Gasellit. The third, community-related behaviors, addresses the customer engagement behaviors that focus on the community per se.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the discussion and conclusions of the study. The chapter starts with a research summary and moves on to presenting the main findings of the study. In addition, theoretical and practical implications are provided. Thereafter come also the references of the thesis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the literature review of the thesis. The chapter starts by discussing literature relevant to Gasellit's end of customer relationships, branding work, with an emphasis on the branding work required for human brands. After presenting the branding work, the examination expands on earlier research on customer engagement aiming to explain its importance in the modern world. Finally, the chapter concludes with the analytical framework of the study.

2.1 BRANDING WORK

Branding is a widely discussed phenomenon in academia. Rooting from marketing scholars in the early 1900s, the term 'brand' was first used to refer to product branding and later to service branding (see Aaker, 1996). At the core of branding is the intention to mark one's property with recognizable signs and symbols (Bastos & Levy, 2012). However, over the past few decades both the use of the term brand and phenomena associated with it have been accepted broadly outside of marketing, as corporations have realized the importance of maintaining a favorable image at the corporate-level in addition to product-level likeability (Cornelissen, 2014).

In the research field of corporate communication branding has been used to refer to the ways corporations differentiate themselves from competitors (Balmer, 2001a; Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Cornelissen, 2014). More specifically, corporate communication literature uses branding to describe the building of relationships between a corporation and its stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 65). It is emphasized that a strong corporate brand gives competitive advantage to a corporation that, besides understanding which factors make the brand unique, succeeds in highlighting its distinctive factors in communications (Aaker, 2004). Likewise, Balmer (2001a) sees that the distinctive factors of corporate brands are derived from corporate identity deliberately by senior management.

In contrast to product branding, corporate branding can be viewed as a holistic approach to differentiate organizations from one another. Corporate branding shares common ground with product branding in that both aim at creating differentiation and igniting preference (Knox & Bickerton, 2003). Conversely, the audience of corporate brands includes all possible stakeholders of a corporation whereas product brands are targeted only to customers (King, 1991; Balmer, 2001b; Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Balmer & Greyser, 2006). Corporate brands, however, need reputation management in order to be widely esteemed by all the stakeholder groups (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 63; see also Harris & Chernatony, 2001). To simplify, Gasellit's branding work can be seen to include the aspects of both product branding, referring to all the means that are targeted to their existing customers, and corporate branding, referring to all the activities that aim to gain new customers in addition to the existing ones.

In line with the multidisciplinary nature of corporate communication (Cornelissen, 2014), corporate branding can be seen as an umbrella concept for any intentional branding an organization does in order to make itself desirable for the stakeholders (Balmer, 2001b). The particular form of corporate branding on which I focus in this thesis is the branding of well-known entities, human brands (e.g. Thomson, 2006; Rindova et al., 2006), which refer here to a music band. Human brands differ from product brands by nature, as they also do in this study: the product brand is the album Gasellit are releasing whereas the human brand, or corporate brand, is the band itself.

The decision of exploring human brands in tandem with corporate brands is made because of the ultimate nature of branding; both require intentional communication that places emphasis on what makes the entities unique (Balmer, 2001a; Thomson, 2006). Thus, I see it as vital for understanding my case band's branding activity, its human branding, that the brand management is approached from the broader foundation of corporate branding. The thesis, however, first elaborates on human brands before expanding its examination on corporate branding.

2.1.1 Human brands

In order to understand the branding work of Gasellit, first it is essential to conclude what kind of a brand they are. A key concept for exploring the brand of a music band appears to be *human brand* which Thomson (2006, p. 104) uses to refer to “any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communications efforts.” The author suggests that human brands should interact directly with consumers transmitting an authentic picture of them. Put another way, human brands should communicate with their followers without the assistance of others (see also Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This is particularly important to note in the online environment where followers do not see who writes the comments and entries on organizations’ social media pages.

Earlier studies on human brands demonstrate how human brands can endorse established consumer brands (Fournier, 1998; Rindova, 2006; Thomson, 2006; Kapferer, 2008), but do not focus on instances where human brands endorse their own offerings such as their music. In practice, a well-established instance of using human brands as endorsers to consumer brands is the use of celebrities when marketing personal care products such as makeup (cf. Aaker, 1996). However, ever since social networking sites have been in use, the terms of what makes someone a celebrity have loosened. For example, famous bloggers are nowadays celebrities on their own right even though their blog entries may even focus on other celebrities (Marwick & Boyd, 2011).

Kapferer (2008, p. 131) adopts the term *celebrity brand* to describe instances when an individual has begun to resemble a product brand. Much of this similarity between celebrity and product brands is based on knowing the factors that make one special and emphasizing that distinctness in the competitive area. Specifically, Kapferer (p. 132) points out that in order to become endorsed in the public eye, first the individual has to find out his or her (1) values, (2) identity, (3) role for the audience, (4) myth, and (5) recognition signs. The author concludes that once these five factors are thoroughly considered, and if the niche for the individual has been found, it is theoretically acceptable to start nurturing and managing the celebrity brand.

As the above examples illustrate, the previous studies on human brands have focused on instances where the human brand is one living entity, but, for some reason, have ignored phenomena where several people constitute a human brand entity – for example, when a musician forms a band with other musicians. However, earlier research on individual musicians concludes that consumers may worship their idols even obsessively (e.g. Fournier, 1998), making it reasonable to assume that music bands can raise the same kind of experience just as well.

The power of human brands may lie in the emotions they evoke in consumers. In Thomson's (2006) view, human brands can produce the feelings of autonomy and relatedness for consumers depending on the quality of interaction. The first, consumers' feeling of autonomy, can be achieved if the interaction of a human brand promotes appreciation, empowerment and understanding. The latter, the feeling of relatedness, is in turn achievable if the interaction of a human brand promotes acceptance, openness and belonging. In addition to these, Fournier (1998) contends that consumers form emotional bonds with some brands, including musicians, which resemble much the emotional bonds they form with other people in the real world.

2.1.2 Brand identity

Any branding work needed to do must build on the identity that a brand has (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Brand identity refers to instances when a brand is considered in a broader sense than by its distinctive name compared with other brands; when its core values and beliefs, the vision is attached to the name (Kapferer, 2008, p. 171). Furthermore, brand identity consists of such brand associations that make the brand's offering, its promise to customers, superior to competitors' offerings (Ghodeswar, 2008). In corporate branding the differentiation should particularly focus on generating the sense of belonging to the stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz, 2003).

The constituents of brand identity have been discussed widely in the branding literature. While Kapferer (2008) links brand identity directly to the vision of an organization, brand identity has also been argued to be the sum of a brand's vision, culture, positioning, personality, relationships and presentation (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001, pp. 443-445). Conversely, many studies on corporate branding have not addressed corporate brand identity at all, focusing instead on the concept of corporate identity (Balmer, 2001a, b; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Cornelissen, et al., 2012). Interestingly, one of the most notable attempts in elaborating the constituents of corporate brand identity comes from David Aaker (2004, p. 11), known for his background in marketing discipline, who describes corporate brand identity as the link on which organization's personnel and customers rely while the meaning is conveyed.

For some reason, brand identity is often explained in relation to other brand-related terms and concepts. The overlap of the terms and concepts demonstrate the vague nature of brands when described from the perceptions of different disciplines (Balmer, 2001a). For the purpose of this thesis and the branding work of Gasellit, the concepts "brand image" and "reputation management" are the most essential as they deal on the receiver's end of communication (Balmer, 2001a; Kapferer, 2008).

2.1.2.1 Brand image

Some scholars explain brand identity in relation to brand image. For example, Aaker (2004) sees that a corporation's brand identity originates from its perceived image in consumers' minds; once the management is familiar with the corporate brand image they have, they must pursue to change that image being in line with their own perception of the brand, their brand identity. The author emphasizes that organizational people play a key role in the formation of corporate brand image. In contrast, Kapferer (2008, p. 174) uses the same concepts as he explains the difference between brand identity and brand image by noting, "brand identity is on the sender's side and brand image is on the receiver's side." He argues that the reason these two may differ lies in all the mixed signals

a consumer receives about a brand's identity. These signals include similarity to competitors' brand identities, incompatibility with the image a particular consumer forms, or plain untruthfulness in reality.

While brand image is sometimes thought to be manageable (Aaker, 2004), managing solely the brand image may be too big a task to be executed. Brands are visual by nature, and therefore, the brand image can constitute of almost anything that consumers see or feel (Schroeder, 2005). Put simply, corporations do not necessarily know about every possible aspect of their prevalent brand image. Thus, brand management should focus on issues that corporations can actually influence. Hatch and Schultz (2003) even point out that changing the corporate brand image is a much heavier process than adjusting the corporation's own vision.

The corporation is likely to gain competitive advantage when focusing on the management of its brand identity (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Elaborating further on corporate brands, Hatch and Schultz (2003) highlight the importance of companies' core values when branding corporations, as they impact positively on stakeholders' sense of belonging to corporate brands. In the case of this thesis, the sense of belonging could also create the sense of communality for the followers of Gasellit.

2.1.2.2 Reputation

Among corporate communication scholars, there appears to be some agreement on the vital role a corporation's reputation plays in the success of its corporate brand (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Cornelissen, 2014). Yet corporate reputation is supposedly a much wider concept and addresses many other instances besides corporate branding. For example, Cornelissen (2014) – besides linking corporate reputation to corporate branding (p. 63) – maintains that reputation management is a vital element of corporate communications altogether (p. xvi). As is obvious, bad reputation is something that no corporation wants to achieve.

The concept of corporate reputation shares common ground with the already discussed brand image concept in that both concepts highlight the importance of being proactive when aiming at the best outcome. However, whereas brand image focuses on the corporation's core values (Hatch & Schultz, 2003), corporate reputation builds more on stakeholder engagement (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Cornelissen, 2014). Still, one apparent similarity between corporate reputation and brand image can be noted when assessing Balmer's (2001a, p. 257) definition of corporate reputation as "the enduring perception held of an organization by an individual, group or network." Thus, the receiver of the message constructs the corporate reputation in the same way as he or she forms the brand image (cf. Kapferer, 2008, p. 174), making the reputation nearly uncontrollable for the management.

When managing corporate reputation, corporations are bound to consider stakeholders as individuals. Branding, including the formation of brand identity, results from social processes (Cornelissen et al., 2012). Thus, a strong and clear brand identity might not be enough in the modern world as such if a brand's mismatch with particular stakeholders remains apparent. For example, Keller and Richey (2006) visualize that strong brands usually have distinctive personalities. These personalities can be seen as one reason why consumers form emotional bonds with some brands that are similar to the bonds they form with people (Fournier, 1998). To clarify, brands need to have both emotional and functional attributes in order to make it possible for consumers to identify with them. Harris and de Chernatony (2001) supplement this by claiming that from the corporate point of view, the most important task in brand management is matching the reputation with brand identity. Obviously, this viewpoint too emphasizes the role of communication as a key tool in constructing and reifying the match between brand identity and reputation.

2.1.3 Positioning the brand

Once the brand identity is clear for an organization, its brand must be positioned in competitive markets (Kapferer, 2008). As Cornelissen et al. (2012) point out that, like the

formation of brand identity, the positioning of corporate brands results from social processes. However, the role and importance of brand identity are not equally important when positioning product brands which may have other unbeatable attributes besides likeability such as an absolute low price (Aaker & Shansby, 1982).

2.1.3.1 Positioning a product brand

Product brands can be positioned in accordance to almost an endless array of options. These various options include positioning by attribute, price/quality ratio, or by the end user; and positioning with respect to usage, product class, or competitors (Aaker & Shansby, 1982). Perhaps the most noticeable remark one can make from this is that product brands are often positioned through comparisons, or in other words, product brands tend to have a market to which they are assigned. Otherwise product brands would make no sense to exist (cf. Kapferer, 2008).

In addition to comparing the product brand to something else, researchers have suggested alternative ways of positioning product brands, such as positioning by the brand's inherent nature. For example, Park et al. (1986) argue that there are three ways of positioning a brand – according to functional, symbolic or experiential traits – which depend on the nature of the brand to be positioned. Consequently, brands that are considered functional perform well in their intended use, whereas symbolic brands satisfy consumers' emotional needs, and experiential brands appeal to senses (ibid.) Bhat and Reddy (1998) expand on this view by noting that each brand may have multiple attributes, and it is actually the management's unique combination of the attributes that indicates whether the positioning succeeds.

2.1.3.2 Positioning a corporate brand

The positioning of corporate brands relies on brand identity (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Aaker, 2004; Balmer & Greyser, 2006). Thus, compared with product brands, corporate brands are positioned on a much more abstract level. This abstractness is due to the fact that corporate brands often need to be compatible with corporations' several product brands, and thus, they cannot be built around on such concrete issues as, for example, an absolute low price. Several viewpoints have been given to what corporate brand identity actually means in practice.

In contrast to product brands, corporate brands are much more driven by the people of an organization (King, 1991; Hatch & Schultz, 2001, 2003; Balmer, 2001b; Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Cornelissen, 2014). Furthermore, corporate brands are multidisciplinary by nature (e.g. Balmer 2001a, b; Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Cornelissen 2014) which means that the marketing way of thinking is not enough when pursuing competitive advantage to the whole corporation. In fact, many studies on corporate branding have addressed the same issue that King (1991) initiated already 25 years ago when he noted that:

“Consumers' choice of what they buy will depend less on an evaluation of the functional benefits to them of a product or service, but rather more on their assessment of the people in the company behind it, their skills, attitudes, behavior, design, style, language, greenism, altruism, modes of communication, speed of response, and so on the whole company culture, in fact.” (p. 46).

Further, in their model about corporate branding Knox and Bickerton (2003) call for managers to position their brands by establishing a series of starting points based on customer value rather than on corporate value. The authors believe that, acting this way, organizations can find out the strengths and weaknesses of their corporate brands, and thus, they are able to detect possible organizational boundaries that hinder the performance of their brand. One example of such customer value that modern consumers will give credit is letting the communities to decide and negotiate a brand's meaning and vital attributes

(Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Kapferer, 2008, p. 150, see also pp. 162-163). From the corporate viewpoint, active customers are usually the most productive ones.

2.1.3.3 Positioning a human brand

Similarly to the positioning of corporate brands, the positioning of human brands is dependent on people (Fournier, 1998; Thomson, 2006). As discussed earlier, human brands are at the same time both the organization and the brand (e.g. Kapferer, 2008, p. 131). Consequently, human brands cannot build on functional attributes in the same way as product brands can (cf. Aaker & Shansby, 1982). They must instead build on attributes they have, but which the product brands do not have. By nature, when people constitute a brand, the people of the brand are a vital attribute in everything the brand does, including its positioning.

The most evident way of positioning human brands, making them attractive to consumers, is to position the brands based on brand identity. In the case of human brands, this means relying on the people of the brand as they embody the brand identity. Subsequently, strong human brands can help consumers to build their respective identities while being in contact with the focal brand (Fournier, 1998). The importance of the people of human brands is also in line with King's (1991, p. 45) view on the positioning of corporate brands: this view purports that consumers' assessment of most preferred brands will be eventually formed based on people behind the brand.

The human brand of a music band must also consider situational factors that are important when positioning any brand (Sujan & Bettman, 1989). Examples of situational factors include the narrow geographical scope of the band that performs in Finnish as well as the possibility that all the fans might not use social media in a manner that would benefit the band. For Gasellit, the Finnish-speaking environment is a given fact that can be taken into account, for example, by interacting with their followers in Finnish. In addition, Gasellit's communications can make use of conventions their followers are known to have (e.g.

Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). Perhaps, instead of focusing solely on positioning the brand, human brands should focus on giving people genuine opportunities to engage with them and take note of the circumstances such as the online environment all along.

2.1.4 Communicating the brand

Narrowing down a brand's identity and its rightful position in relation to other brands need to be accompanied with appropriate communications in order to achieve the ultimate business goals (Cornelissen, 2014). Specifically, in the context of social media Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015) suggest communications to be carried out according to the industry requirements. Recording artists, for instance, can make use of the online environment by providing their followers with links in other media, such as links to music videos or interviews from across the web (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). While the most efficient exact means vary case by case, they all rely on the customers of a brand (Kapferer, 2008, pp. 451-453; see also Click et al., 2013). Put differently, communication is effective when it understands and meets the needs of people for whom it is directed.

In the case of this thesis, a vital communication objective is to promote the human brand Gasellit to existing customers, or Facebook followers. In principle, such promotion requires creativity which is important in any artist brand building (Sjöholm & Pasquinelli, 2014), but which is especially difficult to manage on social media where consumers tend to be more demanding than elsewhere (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, a brand's existing customers on social media sites, its followers, are fairly easy to manage as they have prior motivation to interact with the brand they value (Muntinga et al., 2011).

There are many benefits of promoting a brand expressly to its existing customers. For instance, Reichheld (2006) contends that when a brand is promoted to its current customers, the amount of the promotion is directly proportional to the success of the brand. A fan base is never a coincidence, but rather the result of consistent work on customer relations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). After all, as Kapferer (2008, pp. 256-257) remarks, a

brand must feed its existing customers' attachments to it, because being attached to a brand usually means that customers experience their relationship with the brand valuable. Moreover, the existing customers of a brand are often expectant for any new material it has to offer.

Schroeder (2005) compares performing artists to brand managers and specifies that their active engagement in promoting themselves often has a positive impact on consumers' attitudes. Closely related to this viewpoint, Saboo et al. (in press) underline that human brands can build strong relationships and engage with consumers to a far greater extent than product or service brands may never achieve. Thus, human brands can find their competitive edge from the fundamental nature of the brand – the humans that make it a brand.

Now, after presenting the constituents of branding work and explaining the importance of organizational people when seeking competitive advantage to human brands, the thesis expands its view on the research practices of customer engagement.

2.2 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Customer engagement is a relatively new field of research that has gained wider attention since the beginning of this millennium (Brodie et al., 2011). Being such a novel concept without much research tradition, customer engagement has been defined in various ways, which all highlight customers' identification with the firm or brand (e.g. Bowden, 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010). The definition that I will use in the thesis is the one proposed by Verhoef et al. (2010, p. 247) who conceptualize customer engagement as “a *behavioral manifestation* toward the firm or brand that goes beyond transactions” (emphasis added). Hence, noteworthy for my research project is that engaged customers display their engagement by behaving in some particular ways which make the engagement noticeable, differing from such emotional level engagement that others cannot detect.

Central to the rise of customer engagement is the shifted paradigm in both marketing practice and literature from transactional marketing to relationship marketing (Brodie et al., 2011). More specifically, customer engagement builds on what Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008) call “service-dominant (S-D) logic”, which explains the assumed pitfalls of the traditional transaction marketing by focusing on the exchange of intangible resources, such as value co-creation with customers, in addition to the exchange of tangible resources (i.e. transactions) predominant in the traditional way of thinking. The authors maintain that, according to S-D logic, every tangible product can be considered as a service because they always give pleasure when consumed, thus fulfilling consumers’ psychological needs even after the transaction.

Customer engagement is argued to be an advanced form of customer management, focusing on non-transactional aspects of company-to-customer relationships (Verhoef et al., 2010). It can be thought of either as the motivational engagement consumers experience when they identify with a brand and/or other admirers of the brand (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Schau et al., 2009), or as detectable behaviors that customers express because of being engaged (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Gummerus et al., 2012). Naturally, when customers manifest their engagement through behavior, the focusing on company-to-customer relationships must be extended to include customer-to-customer relationships as well, since engaged customers manifest their engagement publicly (e.g. through user ratings). The major difference between customer engagement and customer management is that, while customer management addresses figures of how each customer impacts an organization’s businesses, customer engagement does not provide such linear cause and effect data (Verhoef et al., 2010).

In scholarly use such concepts as “customer engagement” (Bowden, 2009; Verhoef et al., 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012; Gummerus et al., 2012), “consumer engagement” (Chu & Kim, 2011; Brodie et al., 2013), “customer brand engagement” (Hollebeek, 2011), and “fan engagement” (Stavros et al., 2014) are used to describe similar phenomena, which all relate to engagement in varying contexts. Moreover, the adoption of a concept appears to be dependable on the intended scope of a study,

as researchers often end up using the most-fitting definer of the engagement on which they focus. For example, Gummerus et al. (2012) use “customer engagement” in their study that focuses on the members of a particular gaming community page on Facebook. In contrast, Chu and Kim (2011) implement the concept “consumer engagement” in a study on students’ behavior patterns on several social networking sites. Based on such examples, it seems evident that despite the variance of selected contexts, the phenomenon of engagement has attracted research interest in recent years.

This study focuses on the concept of engagement, which provides rich ground for compounding different scholars. Despite the differing views, engagement is not the only unifying factor in the previous studies, but they all build on S-D logic, and therefore, on relationships marketing as well. The following section investigates these roots more.

2.2.1 S-D logic

Having its background in relationship marketing, S-D logic leans heavily on involving customers in organizations’ activities (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). As a matter of fact, Brodie et al. (2011) see that S-D logic initiated the whole customer engagement discipline when the logic was publicly introduced at the turn of the millennium. The instigators of S-D logic, Stephen Vargo and Robert Lusch (2004, 2008), maintain that S-D logic is much more than a different way of thinking about business. Rather, the logic is a description of the current state of the business world.

In their profound paper Vargo and Lusch (2004) theorize how S-D logic affects organizations’ marketing activities as opposed to the product-centric past. Their main argument is that, besides the fact that many products transform toward being considered as services, consumers play an important role as “co-creators” (the redefined version of “co-producers” was introduced in Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p. 2) of the services that are marketed to them. Accordingly, this shift requires more interaction between a service provider and its customers. Social media sites play a key role in fulfilling such requirements as they allow

consumers to participate in organizations' activities on a daily basis (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008) list ten foundational premises (FPs) of S-D logic (see Table 1). However, the authors argue that the FPs are predominant in all economies, not only when viewed through the lenses of S-D logic.

Table 1. Ten foundational premises (FPs) of S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008)

1.	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.
2.	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange.
3.	Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision.
4.	Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage.
5.	All economies are service economies.
6.	The customer is always a co-creator of value.
7.	The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions.
8.	A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational.
9.	All social and economic actors are resource integrators
10.	Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.

While all the FPs illustrated in Table 1 point toward cooperative company-to-customer relationships, thus reducing the importance of gaining productivity by selling a particular amount of goods, particularly four of them – FP6, FP8, FP9, FP10 – correspond with customer engagement theory (Brodie et al., 2011, p. 253). Firstly, both FP6 and FP8 highlight that organizations and customers jointly co-create value through interactive experiences that occur in service relationships, similarly to what is noted by many customer engagement scholars (Van Doorn et al. 2010, p. 256; Verhoef et al., 2010; Gummerus et al., 2012, p. 877; Vivek et al., 2012, p. 132). Additionally, FP9 implies that value is created within the networks of customers and organizations, which inherently means that

customers manifest their engagement in the company of like-minded (Brodie et al., 2011, p. 253), for example, on Facebook (e.g. Gummerus et al., 2012; Stavros et al., 2014). Lastly, FP10 highlights that value co-creation is a context-dependent concept (Brodie et al., 2011, p. 253), which implies that the level of customer engagement varies between different brands (Bowden, 2009, p. 71; see also Fournier, 1998). To summarize, S-D logic is a customer-driven approach in that it sees customers are demanding more from service relationships than ever before. Consequently, organizations' main task is to fulfill the changed needs of the customers.

Several researchers have challenged S-D logic's main claim of the dominance of services. For instance, Grönroos (2008) remarks that consumers still purchase offerings as goods if they simply intend to use the goods as facilitators for gaining value, although even he acknowledges that in some cases consumers purchase offerings as services that generate value inherently. On the other hand, Ballantyne and Varey (2006) adopt a view that takes into account how organizations can enhance consumers' value-in-use by intensifying the interaction process itself, reducing the matter of whether consumers are purchasing services or goods. However, even these two aspects imply that value is best achieved when both parties are involved in its creation.

As consumers have become co-creators of services, they engage with a smaller number of organizations (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 13). Naturally, when consumers cooperate with increasingly fewer service providers, the remaining few relationships will develop further than what they would have otherwise been. For example, Fournier (1998, p. 358) has found evidence that consumers who are strongly committed to a brand do not reach that state by chance. Instead, consumers experiment for an indefinite time how well they can build their selfhood through the brand before deciding whether it fulfills their needs.

In line with the co-creative characteristic of S-D logic, many contemporary musicians have improved their fan interaction utilizing various social media sites and applications. For example, a Finnish singer-songwriter, Anssi Kela, broadcasts live performances from his home on Facebook and plays songs that followers are requesting at the moment via

comments (Koppinen, 2015). Thus, besides co-creating the performances on Facebook, the followers also manifest their engagement through detectable behaviors, which is a good example of a pattern recognized in the theoretical models of customer engagement (e.g. Verhoef et al., 2010, p. 247).

2.2.2 The medium of Facebook

In addition to engaging with the brand or organization, customers must be engaged with the medium – otherwise the communication could not be considered effective (Calder & Malthouse, 2008; Calder et al., 2009; Muntinga et al., 2011). Natural media for this purpose are social media, which refer to internet-based applications that allow consumers to create and share contents with others (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Over the past decade, the Internet has welcomed various social media sites which provide both consumers and organizations with a wide array of options for engaging, not only with each other, but also with the medium (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Social media can strengthen both company-to-customer and customer-to-customer relationships by fostering interactive experiences (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012).

The medium of the present study, Facebook, was founded in the U.S.A in 2004 and has at the present on average 1.09 billion active daily users worldwide (Facebook, 2016a). At the time when writing the thesis, Facebook is the leading social networking site in the world with a total number of 1.59 billion active monthly users. In contrast, the second most used social media application, WhatsApp, has 1 billion monthly users, whereas the popular microblogging site, Twitter, has 320 million monthly users, which leaves it holding the ninth place in the rank. (Statista, 2016). Facebook offers its users various tools for keeping touch with one's acquaintances, including a messenger application for mobile users, a possibility to comment on other users' pictures and personal timelines, opportunities to organize in groups and to subscribe, or 'like', Facebook pages of different organizations whose content a user wants to follow in his or her personalized news feed.

These Facebook pages are designed for public figures, such as musicians, and other organizations that want to improve their online presence. (Facebook, 2016b).

As a social networking site, Facebook is fairly applicable to share rich media – that is both text-based and makes use of pictures and videos – but also provides users with an opportunity for high self-disclosure since everything is done with real names (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Many consumers use Facebook for building their digital selves, disclosing personal information much more than in the real world (Belk, 2013). The same applies to organizations as they would also benefit from personalized social presence.

In any social media organizations should proactively, rather than interactively, engage with their followers in order to gain a more favorable impact on sales (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Köhler et al., 2011; Saboo et al., in press). This is achieved through a compelling social media voice (Kane et al., 2009) and otherwise humane behavior (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 267). Thus, when utilizing Facebook in customer communications, organizations should bear in mind that too enthusiastic promotion may irritate the followers who use the site for many other purposes in their lives besides interacting with one particular organization (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 263). In other words, organizations that successfully exploit social media are most often familiar with the needs of their followers.

Saboo et al. (in press) suggest that in social media brand managers should focus on fan engagement rather than continually pursuing to get more followers. Moreover, since social media users demand much more from organizations than only replies to their comments (cf. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), organizations need to be proactive in that environment. Social media sites are not only tools for communication, but rather a big part of contemporary communications (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Put simply, once an organization decides to invest in social media its personnel must be committed to the decision.

2.2.3 Interactivity

At the core of customer engagement is consumers' interactive experiences when being in contact with the brand and/or other admirers of the brand (Brodie et al., 2011). As a consequence of the interactive nature, a growing number of contemporary scholars have re-directed the focus from motivational engagement to behavioral engagement (e.g. Bowden, 2009; Verhoef et al., 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012), which is inherent to the customer engagement observed on various social media sites, such as word-of-mouth, user-ratings, blogging, and similar phenomena (cf. Verhoef et al., 2010). In the case of digital music, Vaccaro and Cohn (2004) underline that the most effective business model is one that emphasizes service marketing and customer relationships.

From consumers' point of view, engagement can only occur in the circumstances where the object of their affection is a tangible entity such as a brand (Brodie et al., 2011). Consequently, engagement does not happen accidentally but it results from consumers' long-term devotion to a brand. However, Higgins and Scholer (2009) note that engaging can be either positive (e.g. writing a positive review) or negative (e.g. writing a negative review) which demonstrates how consumers co-create value in accordance with S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). The more consumers trust the brand, the more likely they are to engage with it (Bowden, 2009; Harris & Dennis, 2011), and the more loyal advocates they are for the brand (Munnukka et al., 2015). Therefore, it is crucial for successful customer engagement that organizations recognize when their customers are both willing and ready to engage with them.

Because contemporary customers yearn to co-create (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008), and since arts marketing is customer-centric by nature (Bernstein, 2007, p. 16), interactive communication is unquestionable in the case of this study. After all, interaction is often a fairly simple way of generating customer engagement especially in the online environment. For instance, Khobzi and Teimourpour (2015) point out that when companies campaign on their Facebook pages, the easiest way of getting followers on board is to tag their names or address their comments. However, once the followers are on board the

mere commenting and tagging of names may not be enough as consumers want to have a more active role in organizations' activities (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Next, the review on interactivity is broadened to two specific cases on how Facebook users may respond to interactive communications and co-create value.

2.2.3.1 Communalities

In the modern world, engaged customers meet and interact with other like-minded consumers in virtual communities, which are organized around some common object of interest (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). These communities can be formed either onto independent web sites (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002) or as embedded in other sites, including Facebook (Zaglia, 2013). Members of virtual communities typically interact with one another through textual expressions (e.g. Kozinets, 2002; Schau et al., 2009). Such interaction can be seen also in Gasellit's Facebook page where all communications make use of computer-based technology.

In contrast to traditional communities, which may form for example geographically, the most distinguishing feature of virtual communities is that they are driven by consumers' volitional choice (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). Derived from this feature, people may also be members in multiple virtual communities at the same time. Therefore, a human brand must find out its qualities that feed consumers' identification with it the most (cf. Thomson, 2006) and consistently nurture the qualities when interacting with the members of its virtual community (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012; Click et al., 2013). It stands to reason that consumers can also volitionally choose to leave the communities they find useless.

Virtual communities usually have their own practices – rituals and traditions – that create value for community members (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Schau et al., 2009). These practices include recommending brand-related information to other members (Algesheimer et al., 2005), celebrating a brand's success (Schau et al., 2009), and joking around (Kozinets, 1997). Furthermore, most virtual communities have

shared conventions and language, jargon, that can be accompanied with other textual elements such as smileys (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; see also Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, p. 58). While the practices usually serve for the good of the community, as is the case when one exhibits his or her commitment to others (Muniz & O’Guinn), they may nevertheless focus on the focal brand (Schau et al., 2009; see also Kozinets, 1997).

From consumers’ viewpoint, the factor that makes a particular virtual community superior to other communities is either the community’s consciousness of kin – people’s intrinsic connection to other members (Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001) – which Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002, p. 2) call “we-intentions” – or strong identification with the common consumption object (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). However, the human brand of Gasellit is a special case, as it directly connects with its Facebook followers and is simultaneously a consumption object for them. In this case, Gasellit can take advantage of the fact that their brand is humane, and therefore, can interact with the community by itself (cf. King, 1991).

2.2.3.2 Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth (WOM) refers to the transmission of information between consumers (Grewal et al., 2003). From a marketer’s point of view, WOM are the unpaid means of communication as opposed to the paid and controllable means, such as advertising (e.g. Chu and Kim, 2011). According to Bernstein (2007, p. 34), WOM is among the best ways of attracting teenagers. Further, Balmer (2001a) stresses that nowadays companies cannot consider only end-users as the target of their communications, as companies’ messages are likely to reach an even larger audience in the present world (cf. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Therefore, peer support is a valuable asset for any contemporary business.

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to the WOM activity that occurs through the Internet (Chu & Kim, 2011). As Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) argue, eWOM has two ad-

vantages as opposed to the traditional WOM. Firstly, it spreads at a faster pace, and secondly, it is easier to measure. The latter advantage makes it also easier for companies to measure the success of their campaigns, even if they would not know the exact reachability of their messages. However, the benefits are also the biggest challenges in eWOM – undesired events and news spread just as fast as the desired ones.

Altogether, eWOM can take many forms such as recommendations (Algesheimer et al., 2005), user-reviews (Higgins & Scholer, 2009) or members tags (Smith et al., 2007), which can all be labeled as “buzz” (cf. de Valck et al., 2009; Dhar & Chang, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). EWOM, the buzz, spreads naturally in virtual communities, which are important sources of information for community members (e.g. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Chu & Kim, 2011). This is due to a high degree of trust that prevails in virtual communities (Chu & Kim, 2011). In a sense, eWOM can be found practically in every virtual community where discussions relate to a shared object of interest and users get to see each other’s reactions.

Relating to this thesis and eWOM revolving around music, Dhar and Chang (2009) have found evidence that the more buzz about a band’s new album prior to its release, the bigger its sales will be. Additionally, musicians can generate the buzz themselves through activities that aim at stimulating the audience, such as teasers for upcoming music videos and status updates on soon to be published albums (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Properly evoked and exploited consumers can be powerful advocates for any musician in which they believe and find a reason to identify with. In all, eWOM and virtual communities are both prevalent in the case of this thesis as all the communications on Gasellit’s Facebook page build upon the two.

2.3 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This final subchapter of literature review presents the analytical framework of the study. An illustration of the framework can be seen in Figure 1. The analytical framework is

constructed based on the reviewed literature on branding work, with a specific emphasis placed on human brands, and customer engagement, with an emphasis on service-dominant (S-D) logic. The framework combines most useful elements of the literature for the present study. Thus, it is an established, context-dependent overview suitable only for this study.

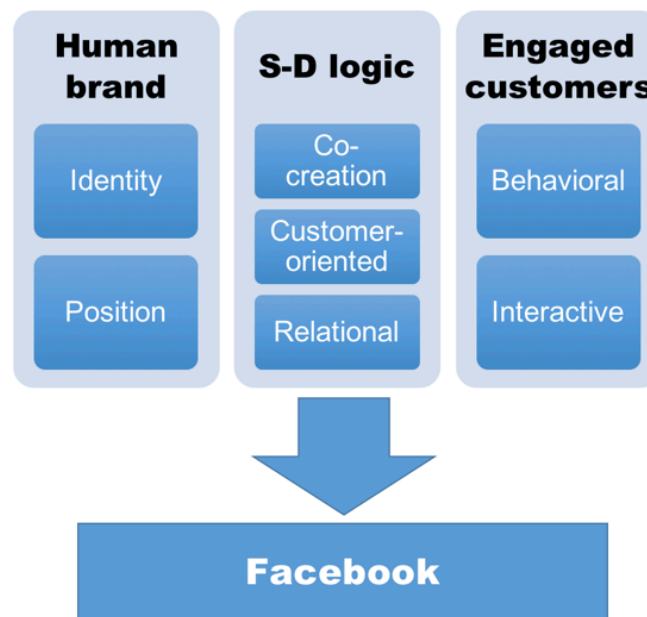


Figure 1. Analytical framework of the study

Figure 1 demonstrates how human brands, S-D logic and engaged customers come together in the context of Facebook. The most important factors in human brand building, a brand's identity and positioning, must be taken into account when choosing rightful communications on Facebook. On the other hand, S-D logic requires that the human brand of the study, Gasellit, involves customers in value co-creation, and is both customer-oriented and relational in everything it does in order to enhance the interactive experiences of the customers. Finally, engaged customers, as a concept derived from the discussed customer engagement literature, show their engagement by manifested behaviors such as commenting and liking Gasellit's posts, while being interactive all along.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological choices of the thesis. The chapter is structured as follows. Subchapter 3.1 discusses the research design by introducing the guiding research method, netnography, as well as the special characteristics of the applied case setting. In subchapter 3.2, the process of data collection will be explained, and also the primary and secondary data will be presented. Subchapter 3.3 describes how the data was analyzed. Finally, subchapter 3.4 takes the trustworthiness of the study into consideration.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is a single case study that focuses on a music band called Gasellit, their use of Facebook when being in contact with their followers (i.e. fans), and further, the followers' behavior on Gasellit's Facebook page. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), each case study can be made applying either qualitative or quantitative research approach. The approach of this study is qualitative which exploits multiple methods for analyzing the data. In general, data analysis in qualitative research projects is said to rely more on the researcher's interpretation of the content than on the frequency of observed events (e.g. Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 25; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11).

The research project is compiled according to the method of netnography, which to a large degree addresses, applies and resembles much ethnographic studies, the difference being that investigations take place in the online environment which inherently lack of face-to-face interactions taking place in real time, and, consequently, places more emphasis on the researcher's familiarity with the medium and context of the study (Kozinets, 2002, 2010). Over the following two sections, I will first offer a closer view on the method of netnography aiming to clarify how it influences this study. After that, the particular setting of the single case study of the thesis will be further explained.

3.1.1 The method of netnography

This section aims at clarifying netnography by discussing its history and application in previous studies on online communities. The examination of netnography is done in tandem with its preceding method, ethnography, which although relating closely to netnography, differs from it in terms of research environment. The differences between the two are addressed when necessary.

The concept of netnography, as defined by Robert V. Kozinets (2002, pp. 2-3), is “*a qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communications.*” Hence, netnography refers to a specific application of ethnographic studies, the one that places them in the online environment. Ethnography, on the other hand, is a methodology used in studying people partaking in social phenomena as they occur (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 281). In ethnographic studies, the researcher both observes participants as they participate in local social activity and, while observing the phenomenon, joins them as a member of the community (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 281; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, p. 48).

Ever since Kozinets (1997) first introduced netnography to the rest of scientific community with his study on the subculture of the television series *The X-Files*, an increasing number of researchers have applied the method in a wide range of studies on online communities. For example, Schau et al. (2009) utilized netnography for studying how online brand communities create value in practice. Conforming more to this thesis, Zaglia (2013) demonstrated in her study on Facebook brand pages that brand communities embedded in social networking sites are just as real as any other online or offline community.

The major difference between traditional ethnographies and netnographies is the lack of real time interactions when social phenomena are being studied in the online environment (Kozinets, 2002, 2010). As the researcher cannot detect participants’ facial cues based on conversations that occur in the online environment, he or she can build upon the cues that

are characteristic of textual expressions such as the use of smileys (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, p. 58). Another difference between the two is that, unlike traditional ethnographies, netnographies can be executed utterly imperceptibly from the other community members (Kozinets, 2002). Thus, members of the community do not necessarily know when they are being studied since the researcher's entrée to online communities might be somewhat discreet in contrast to offline communities.

Ethnography and netnography are inherently multimethod approaches whose data is always tied to a specific research setting, and, consequently, no universal generalizations can be made based on the findings of that particular, locally conducted phenomenon (Kozinets, 2010, p. 59). Applicable data for any given netnography usually include the researcher's reflective fieldnotes of discussions in the community – or observations of any other publicly available information on the community being studied – and possible interviews to be combined with the observations (Kozinets, 2012; see also Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, pp. 52-53). Subsequently, information obtained in publicly unavailable ways is ideally not to be used (Kozinets, 2002). For example, in this study I have not read any of the private messages Gasellit's followers have sent to them, nor even asked for a permission to look at any of the publicly unavailable content.

The practice of netnography follows the six steps of ethnography: 1. Research planning, 2. Community entrée, 3. Data collection, 4. Data analysis, 5. Ensuring ethical research, and 6. Presenting the results to the people who were studied (Kozinets, 2010, p. 61). However, the steps are only general guidelines for netnographies; in reality some steps are desirably carried out simultaneously (*ibid*). For instance, the collection and analysis of data usually complement each other as netnographies build on the reflective fieldnotes of the researcher (Kozinets, 2002). Furthermore, some of the more recent netnographies, focusing on online communities moderated by companies (e.g. Zaglia, 2013) or third parties (e.g. Orsolini et al., 2015), have been conducted in a completely unobtrusive manner, without informing the community members at any point, so that the discussions would be authentic. The wholeness of the study is an important factor in any netnography as the findings and settings are always context-dependent.

Kozinets (2002) claims that netnography is particularly useful methodology if the researcher aims to interpret the meanings of a specific online community from a rather rich set of data; when he or she is able to provide in-depth analysis and insights on what the community members are doing, and why, without having to rely on quantified results. Put simply, netnography fits best when the researcher does not have to start the investigation from a scratch, but he or she has prior knowledge of the subject and community being studied.

3.1.2 The Case

The case band of the thesis, Gasellit, is a Helsinki-based rap-quartet whose third full-length album, *Seis*, was released on October 30, 2015. Having released one self-published EP and two full-length albums prior to *Seis*, the release of the new album marked a milestone in the history of the band because it was their first album with a major record label, Johanna Kustannus, which is owned by Universal Music Group.

Founded in 2008, the band has four members – known by their nicknames Hätä-Miikka, Päkä, Thube Hefner and Musajusa – who rap in their native Finnish. The previous two full-length albums, *Kiittämätön* (2012) and *Aina* (2013) peaked to positions 26 (IFPI Finland, 2012) and 16 (IFPI Finland, 2013) in the official Finnish album chart. In the context of the Finnish rap, Gasellit can be said to represent the younger generation, their music being classified more as underground rather than commercial within the genre. Over the years Gasellit have built a reputation as good live performers.

The focus of this thesis, Gasellit's Facebook page, is the band's major communication channel for both informing the fans and sharing the moments with them. The Facebook page has 11.269 likers (i.e. followers) as of April 27, 2016 (Gasellit, 2016). Gasellit do not have an official web page, but they employ social media instead. In addition to Facebook, Gasellit have accounts on Instagram and YouTube. They also utilize music service Spotify when releasing new music. None of the latter three is examined in this study.

The timeframe of the study was the six-month period from September, 2015 to February, 2016, during which Gasellit posted 68 entries to their Facebook page. In this study, I focused on the 68 entries and all the activity related to them. The entries included profile picture and cover photo updates, Gasellit's links to other media – including links to their YouTube channel, the photos Gasellit posted to their timeline, and one video posted directly to the Facebook page. In total, the entries received 17.325 likes, 77 shares, and 261 comments, of which 199 were from the Facebook followers and 62 from Gasellit¹.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

The dataset of the study is two-fold including both primary and secondary data, which are presented next in two separate sections. Firstly, I will present the primary data of the study collected from my online observations of Gasellit's Facebook page. Secondly, I will explain the use of the secondary data, a semi-structured interview with Gasellit.

3.2.1 Primary data: Online observation

The primary data of the study consist of my online observations of the activity that both Gasellit and the followers expressed during the six-month observation period from September 2015 to February 2016.

I started to occasionally observe Gasellit's Facebook page already in the spring of 2015 right after I had selected them for the case of my thesis. At that time, I mostly paid attention to how often Gasellit posted to their Facebook page and what the general reception of the posts was. During the spring, and in line with Kozinets' (2002) view of reflective fieldnotes, I wrote some notes of Gasellit's general patterns on Facebook as well as the

¹ The amounts of likes, shares and comments as of April 27, 2016.

followers' most common reactions to them. The notes were compiled on my mobile phone and stored in a cloud service as I was writing them.

Since the fall of 2015, I began focusing on the Facebook community more closely. This included copying all the 68 entries, their comments, likes and shares, to my computer with my own remarks added to them. The entries were compiled in six separate documents; one for each month and each document was organized chronologically. Each entry and each comment was written down exactly as they were posted on Facebook (Kozinets, 2010, p. 101) while my own remarks were added in the margins of the documents (p. 114). At this point, I began tentative grouping of the comments, but did not categorize them any further as I wanted to wait for the time period to end before deciding the exact categories. Furthermore, both the copied entries and comments were written down in their original language in Finnish, excluding two community expressions that were always expressed in English. However, in the remaining of the thesis the posts are always presented bilingually; all the English versions of the comments are based on my translations.

In general, the primary data was collected by utilizing many benefits made possible by the online environment and Facebook. For instance, I did not have to sit around waiting for new posts to come out, which would have required a tremendous amount of time, but instead, I logged into Facebook on a daily basis and saw immediately if something new had happened since the last login.

3.2.2 Secondary data: Semi-structured interview

In addition to online observation, qualitative interviews are also important data sources for both qualitative studies in general (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 475) and for netnographies in particular (Kozinets, 2010, p. 110). For this thesis, I conducted one semi-structured interview with Gasellit in order to gain a deep understanding about the observed patterns. The interview was held in a Helsinki-based restaurant in the daytime of March 9, 2016,

with three of the four members of the band; Hätä-Miikka, Päkä and Musajusa. The interview was conducted in Finnish which is the native language of Gasellit and mine. In the remaining of the thesis, all the referred parts of the interview are presented only in English and they are based on my translations.

My aim with the interview was to gain insights on Gasellit's use of Facebook as well as their relationship with their fans. However, as I did not want my study to be built on interviews, but rather on the online observation, the interview was considered more as a source of background information rather than a data source by itself. In the remaining of the paper, the interview will be referred to only when it is valuable for the study.

Finally, I see it as vital to mention that conducting an interview with Gasellit was possible because of my acquaintanceship with the band. Hence, I was able to discuss the findings with the band being studied, but I also gained some additional knowledge of the fans' general engagement with the band. However, none of the private messages of the fans that were sent to Gasellit's different social media accounts or elsewhere have been reviewed in this thesis.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

This subchapter enlightens the data analysis of the study. However, it is worth noting that ideally in netnographic studies, the processes of data collection and analysis are not separated but intertwined (e.g. Kozinets, 2002). As mentioned earlier, much of the analysis of the present study was conducted based on the online observation which was the primary data source, while the semi-structured interview with Gasellit served more as a source for background information to ensure that some of my interpretations were correct in reality. For example, in the interview Gasellit confirmed the assumption I made during the online observation of their car being manufactured by a French brand.

The process of interpretation and meaning-making in my data analysis was influenced by ‘hermeneutic circle’ which Kozinets (2010, p. 120) views as applicable for analyzing netnographic data when the researcher wants to build on his own reasoning and interpretation rather than relying on computer-based programs. In hermeneutic circle, the researcher reviews little pieces of data over and over again, and simultaneously, begins reflecting on how each small component affects the whole. Resulting from this process, categories start to emerge, and eventually, the little pieces of information will form structured wholeness. (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). Furthermore, Thompson et al. (1994, p. 433) note that this repetitive process is necessary if the researcher wants to build holistic understanding about data, because reaching any conclusions requires time.

In the present study I started my hermeneutic circle from the tentative groups of comments I had formed when copying the comments to my computer. While doing so, the remarks I had added to page margins played a vital role in the subsequent interpretation, as the final groups of findings were formed based on how I reflected on my own notes. Furthermore, of three categories in my findings – immediate reactions to posts, Gasellit-related behaviors, and community-related behaviors – the latter two were influenced by Brodie et al. (2013), who classified their findings in much the same way in a netnography on a Facebook brand community. However, as I thought that following solely their footsteps would not provide sufficient results for the present study, I decided to devote one part of the findings to the followers’ immediate reactions to Gasellit’s posts. This way I was able to analyze the followers’ general attitude toward Gasellit’s posts in addition to the more specific Gasellit- and community-related engagement behaviors.

Lastly, when starting the study in September 2015 Facebook offered users three options for reacting to posts; ‘liking’, ‘commenting’ and ‘sharing.’ However, at the end of February 2016 the option of liking was expanded as Facebook added five additional ways to like content on the site; ‘love’, ‘haha’, ‘wow’, ‘sad’, and ‘angry’, accompanied with a representative smiley for each which unfolds when pressing the like-button. Now, Facebook lists the amounts of these as likes but users may also review the amount of each

separately. Anyhow, the dataset of this study contains only one Gasellit's post which received any of such, specifically three 'loves', which were counted in the thesis as likes, because they nevertheless indicate positive reactions, and simultaneously, are the only representatives of additional likes in the study.

3.4 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

This final subchapter of methodology demonstrates the trustworthiness of the present study. For evaluating that, the demonstration follows the evaluation criteria Guba (1981) introduce for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research projects – credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The first criterion, *credibility*, refers to the truth value of a study. Moreover, when the study is credible, its findings and methods are in line, resulting in a truthful representation of the examined phenomenon. (Guba, 1981, p. 80). One way of establishing this state, as proposed by Guba (1981, p. 84), is that the researcher ensures his familiarity with the topic by observing the phenomenon for a sufficient period of time. In the present study, the observation period on which the findings are based, was six months. In addition to that, informal observation was practiced during several preceding months to ensure a deep understanding about the community practices. Furthermore, this study; its methods, observations and practices were discussed on two occasions in the thesis seminar (Guba, 1981, p. 85; see also Bryman & Bell, 2003, pp. 288-289), and were approved by the peers.

The second criterion, *transferability*, refers to the extent of which a study is executed similarly to previous studies on the phenomenon (Guba, 1981, p. 80). For establishing transferability in this study, previous research projects were explored. Moreover, the findings of the present study are categorized according to a similar study by Brodie et al. (2013), where the main categories of findings were divided into brand-related engagement behaviors and community-related engagement behaviors. The findings of this study also form a clear bridge to the real world as the findings are based on empirical evidence

of the online observation. The findings are presented with examples bilingually; in Finnish which is the original language of the investigated conversations, and in English which is the language of the study. This both ensures that the findings are verifiable to a variety of researchers and offers other Finnish-speaking researchers a possibility to review the accuracy of the translations.

The third criterion, *dependability*, regards the reliability of a research project; whether other researchers would reach the same conclusions if the study was to be conducted again following the same procedures (Guba, 1981, p. 86). For ensuring the dependability of a study, making the results better justified, Guba (ibid.) recommends applying multiple methods, whereas Kovalainen and Eriksson (2008, p. 294) stress that the study must provide sufficient information. In this study a semi-structured interview with the case band was conducted in order to ensure that perceptions of the observed behaviors of the followers were correct. Furthermore, the data collection and analysis processes were thoroughly explained in order to demonstrate how the findings were compiled over time.

The fourth criterion, *confirmability*, refers to the neutrality of a study, that the researcher has reported the studied phenomenon truthfully, leaving his own characteristics out of the study (Guba, 1981, p. 87; Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 289). In this study, I made clear my personal relations to the case band. However, the findings of the study are based on the reflective fieldnotes that were written during the observations, rather than relying on the interview when analyzing. The fieldnotes were written in the margins of the documents where each comment was copied. Hence, the findings of the study are compiled based on data any one would find from Gasellit's Facebook page, whereas the interview conducted for the present thesis was only used to clarify some of the observations.

4. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The chapter is divided into three thematic subchapters. Firstly, subchapter 4.1 discusses the followers' immediate reactions to Gasellit's posts with the aim to offer a general view on what is happening in the community. Secondly, subchapter 4.2 presents all the follower behaviors that related to Gasellit. Finally, subchapter 4.3 focuses on the engagement behaviors that related to the community.

4.1 IMMEDIATE REACTIONS TO POSTS

This first part of the findings presents the general observations of the activity of the followers on Gasellit's Facebook (see Table 2). This subchapter includes five themes, which oftentimes complemented one another and occurred at the same time.

Table 2. Immediate reactions to posts

Liking / commenting / sharing the posts
Positive tone
Commenting ends quite soon after the posts
Comments often relate to the posts
Use of emojis and smileys

The themes of Table 2 represent the nature of all the observed follower activity during the study. Hence, the themes are applicable to the subsequently discussed Gasellit- and community-related behaviors, and therefore, they are analyzed before the more detailed findings. The themes seen in Table 2 are discussed next in the following five sections.

4.1.1 Liking / commenting / sharing the posts

The most common reaction the followers manifest on Gasellit's Facebook page is *liking* the posts of the band. Without exceptions, all the posts of Gasellit gained more likes than comments and shares combined. The observation applies to all kinds of posts: picture updates, links to external pages, and timeline posts that seek to capture one moment of Gasellit's lives.

The second most common response to the posts of Gasellit is *commenting*. However, the number of comments is significantly lower to the number of likes, which might signal of the relative ease the followers want to manifest their identification with the band. Although fairly often observed, the followers do not comment on every single post of Gasellit. Still, some similarities appear between the posts that are commented the most, such as the initial post being a photo captured from some particular moment of Gasellit's lives or the post relating to the promotion of the new album. Nevertheless, some of the posts that relate to the new album have not been commented at all. This may be due to the fact that, on some occasions, the band posted even three entries in a row pointing toward the upcoming album *Seis*, which made the followers focus on some entries over the others.

Very rarely do Gasellit's Facebook followers remark the posts by *sharing* them to their social networks, the third response option on Facebook during the study. The majority of the posts have not been shared at all, which might indicate that the followers prefer to support the band only in the company of like-minded. In addition, the ones that have been shared at least to some extent are often shared by few; some of whom appear to be personal acquaintances with Gasellit (e.g. a mother), directly involved in the posted case (e.g. a director of the music video) or are not even people but organizations (e.g. Universal Music Finland).

4.1.2 Positive tone

During the time period of the study, virtually all the manifested behaviors were positive in tone referring to likes, comments and shares. Specifically, only two negative comments were observed in the dataset. The comments were:

No ei nyt oikein saanu kiinni tuosta :0
Like · Reply · September 20, 2015 at 11:01pm

Didn't really get a hold of that :0

Liian lippatukkainen meininki. En osta.
Like · Reply · October 25, 2015 at 2:48pm

Too mainstreamy vibes. I won't buy.

Contrary to the two negative comments, all the other 197 comments (99 %) of the followers were positive in tone. The followers that participate in the community seem to be sincerely happy on behalf of Gasellit and want to show their support for the band.

Gasellit did not reply to the negative comments by any means, but completely ignored them. When asked about this in the interview, Musajusa explained the observation by saying that, "Of course I can remember the comment (the second one presented above) and it did not feel nice, but how was I supposed to react to it?" Thus, Gasellit are not hostile toward negative comments but such comments simply leave the band somewhat speechless. Still, as said, the amount of negative comments was rather small, and therefore, they are not examined any further in this thesis.

4.1.3 Commenting ends quite soon after the posts

The generalized observation of commenting in the Facebook community is that, if particular posts gain comments to any extent, the followers remain active for about a day. The most popular posts, having around ten comments from the followers, actually often reach the peak of their popularity in the first few hours after being posted. After that, the pace

of new comments coming drops toward the evening and possibly only one or two followers continue to comment in the morning. It is even more exceptional that the followers come back to posts after a few days have passed by, which on the other hand seems to be quite pointless, as both Gasellit and other followers hardly ever note the comments thereafter in any way. This observation particularly indicates that Gasellit's followers require interactive initiatives from the band in order to manifest their engagement on the Facebook page.

4.1.4 Comments often relate to the posts

The comments of the followers often relate to the posts on which they are commented. That being said, the followers do target different relators; comments can be built around textual expression, the background landscape of a photo, Gasellit, the commenter's assumed hometown, and so on. Moreover, if a follower had something important to ask for his or her own benefit, the Facebook community was left undisturbed as he or she probably solved it in some other way.

Gasellit confirmed in the interview that their fans send private messages to them "a few times a month." These contacts are most often questions about live show locations and age limits, or something else that a fan wants to know more of, such as Gasellit's fan apparel. Meanwhile, virtually none of the comments on Gasellit's Facebook page and the ones that are sent privately to the band are big emotional outbursts but the followers behave in a rather subtle manner.

From now on, when presenting the findings of the analysis, it will be notified in advance, if needed, when the findings of some particular section are based on comments that were unrelated to the posts. Moreover, if not explicitly mentioned, the findings of a particular section are based on engagement behaviors (commenting, liking, sharing) that related to the posts where they were expressed.

4.1.5 Use of emojis and smileys

Of particular note for the follower comments is that many of them make use of emojis or keyboard-based smileys to support the reactions Gasellit's posts have evoked. In the remaining of this thesis, when citing the comments, I will write them exactly as they were posted on the Facebook page. In other words, if a comment did not apply emojis but keyboard symbols, it is presented here with keyboard symbols. However, not all the comments applied emojis and smileys, but about a half of them, and when they were applied, the usage was always in line with the tone of the textual expression.

4.2 GASELLIT-RELATED BEHAVIORS

This subchapter will discuss Gasellit-related engagement behaviors of the followers (see Table 3). The behaviors are classified into three main categories. The first category addresses commenting that manifest fandom to Gasellit. This category is divided into six subcategories. The second category is about acknowledging Gasellit's success. This second category includes three subcategories. Finally, the third category of Gasellit-related behaviors of the followers concerns joking around in the community in ways that aimed to amuse Gasellit. This last category comprises two subcategories.

Table 3. Gasellit-related behaviors

Manifesting fandom	Direct admiration of Gasellit	Related to a post
	Notifying process of music making	
	Focusing on content of posts	
	Thanking and praising live shows	
	Pointing out personal relations to Gasellit	Unrelated/related to a post
	Requesting live shows	
Acknowledging Gasellit's success	Liking success posts	Related to a post
	Adapting and conforming Gasellit's tone	
	Congratulating when needed	
Joking around	Basing on pictures	Related to a post
	Being verbally inventive	

Table 3 presents the 11 specific Gasellit-related behaviors that are divided into three thematic categories. As seen, nine out of 11 specific behaviors concern behaving that related to the original posts of Gasellit, whereas two of the specific behaviors are either related or unrelated to the original posts. The three thematic categories seen in the left column of Table 3 are discussed next over the following three sections.

4.2.1 Manifesting fandom

The first category of Gasellit-related behaviors of the followers addresses the vast majority of comments that indicate fandom or otherwise compassionate behavior with respect to the band. These can be further categorized into comments that related to the posts of

Gasellit and to comments that were both related and unrelated to the posts. A total of six subcategories emerged. Firstly, I will present the four that clearly related to the posts of Gasellit, after which, the examination is expanded on the two that were both related and unrelated.

4.2.1.1 Direct admiration of Gasellit

The first subcategory of the comments that manifest fandom deals with comments that directly focus on the admiration of Gasellit. Both comments about the whole band and comments about some particular member of Gasellit were observed. Examples of the former include: “*Olette kauniita ❤️ (You are beautiful ❤️)*”, “*voe juku mitä vauvvoja! (oh boy what babies!)*” and “*Tärkeää käydä mummolassa (It is important to visit grandma.)*” The latter, comments about some particular member, almost always refer to Hätä-Miikka, such as “*Janoinen hätis (Thirsty hätis)*”, “*Hätis ei oo vielä näemmä päättänyt, pitääkö se kaiken sisällä 😊 (Apparently, Hätis hasn’t decided yet whether he’s keeping everything inside 😊)*” and “*Ihana Hätis!!! ❤️ (Lovely Hätis!!! ❤️)*” However, one additional post-related comment addressed Päkä instead of Hätä-Miikka, “*Tiedossani on, että Päkän äiti tykkää myös Beatlesista ja John Lennonista ;)* (I happen to know that Päkä’s mother also likes Beatles and John Lennon ;)).” This comment also meets to some extent the conditions for comments which are unrelated to the original posts and which point out commenters’ personal relations to Gasellit. Such comments are analyzed subsequently in the subsection 4.2.1.5.

In addition to the comments that addressed Gasellit, two post-related comments were about the car Gasellit are using when driving to live shows around Finland, “*Ei pitäis olla ongelma ranskan manaatille (Shouldn’t be a problem for the french manatee)*” and “*Onko Sinivalaassa nastat alla? (Does the Blue Whale have spikes?)*” Interestingly, these two particular comments concerning the car made use of sea metaphors, unlike any other comments, although the metaphor was different in either case. The latter one even

mentions the blue car Gasellit have used. In the interview, Gasellit confirmed that they once drove a car that was blue, but they are not using the car anymore, and it is not even seen in the picture where the comment came from. They were nevertheless joyful over the fact that their electric-blue car clearly had impressed someone.

4.2.1.2 Notifying process of music making

The second subcategory of comments that manifest fandom is about noting the progression of Gasellit's music making. These comments include all notions of the following: "*At last*", "*Can't wait*", "*Very nice*" and "*Nice*." The comments that are exactly similar or close to similar to the latter three, i.e. when stated explicitly in English, are also examples of phrases that can be considered a community language used by both Gasellit and the followers. These phrases are analyzed in more detail in the subsection 4.3.1.1 where the community expressions are taken into closer examination. Of particular note here in this subsection is that the comments that fall into this subcategory include also the use of the expressions in Finnish (e.g. the Finnish-phrase "*En malta oottaa*" translates into English as "*I can't wait*"). However, when the phrases are expressed in Finnish they do not seem to point to community expressions; rather, they are genuine reactions that coincidentally translate into English as such.

All in all, the comments that note the process of Gasellit's music making are sincerely expectant for the new material. Throughout the observed six months, Gasellit kept the followers updated on the album *Seis*, upcoming live shows, and their appearances in other media, which were responded by the followers through these comments.

4.2.1.3 Focusing on content of posts

The third subcategory of comments that manifest fandom concerns the comments that focus on the content of the initial posts. For example, the followers commented on Gasellit's links to external sites, in this case YouTube, as "*Huikeutta! (Amazingness!)*", "*Huikkee video! Mikä toi kappale on mikä alkaa soimaa kohdassa 8.20? (An amazing video! What is that song that starts playing at 8.20?)*", *teijä pitäis tehdä vlogi videoita! aiva loistosettii jälleen kerran! (you guys should do vlog videos! truly amazing once again!)*" or statuses exclusive to Facebook such as, "*Osoite oli kyllä oikea! 😊 (The address was indeed right! 😊 [for the award of the band of the year at Funky Awards 2015.]*) These comments often appear as candid expressions that inherently manifest fandom to the band. None of Gasellit is specified in the comments more than the others, nor do the comments even regard Gasellit's music. Likewise, the comments make hardly any sense without knowing the context of the comments. An example of such comment, "*Huikkea! (Amazing!)*", simply has to be associated with a post on which it is commented because it manifests nothing in itself.

4.2.1.4 Thanking and praising live shows

The fourth subcategory of manifesting fandom includes the comments that address the live performances of Gasellit. These comments were exceptional in that they were always commented later than all the other comments of particular posts. Although not all the posts initiated this kind of commenting, there were two clear exceptions, the live show held in Oulu on September 11, 2015 and Gasellit's self-organized event, *bileet sillan alla (the party under the bridge)*, held in Helsinki on October 17, 2015, where the band also filmed a music video for the single *Betoni-intiaani*. Comments for the former include "*Oulun keikka 5/5 (Oulu's gig 5/5)*", "*noissa maisemis mielilepää 😊 kiitoksia oulun keikasta oli aivan huikkee 👍 (mind rests in those landscapes 😊 thanks for oulu's gig was*

absolutely amazing 👍”, and for the latter, “*oli kyllä erityisen väkevä meno! (the atmosphere was indeed particularly strong!)*” and “*Meno parkilla oli hieno ja vilpitön ja lopputuotoskin 🙌👍 Arvostuss! (The atmosphere in the park was great and sincere and the final output as well 🙌👍 Respect!)*” All these comments were noted by Gasellit’s like, but they were not commented.

In addition to the previous four subcategories, the followers also expressed their fandom to Gasellit sometimes without relating to the original posts. Numerous of manifested behaviors can be said to meet this condition – as all the activity on Gasellit’s Facebook page essentially results from being a fan of the band – but two clear patterns were more common than others; pointing out personal relations to Gasellit and requesting live shows to several cities and towns. Nevertheless, both these patterns were also problematic in that such comments were not always unrelated to the posts or even in line with other similar ones. Consequently, they are classified in the thesis as partly unrelated in order to avoid confusing them with the previous behaviors that were easily perceptible, appeared often and clearly related to the posts.


4.2.1.5 Pointing out personal relations to Gasellit


The first subcategory of comments that manifest fandom but do not always relate to the initial posts of Gasellit, regards the comments that point out commenters’ personal relations to Gasellit. There were overall three comments that pointed out the commenters’ personal relations to at least one member of Gasellit so much so that the comments could be interpreted even as bragging. Furthermore, two of the three comments were unrelated to the posts on which they were commented, whereas one comment about the music taste of the mother of Päkä, presented already in the subsection 4.2.1.1, related to the post on which it was commented. The former two were:


Pekka saa myös takkinsa takaisin heti viikonlopun jälkeen. Se on juhlan paikka!

Like · Reply ·  1 · October 1, 2015 at 4:42pm

Pekka will also get his jacket back right after the weekend. It is time to celebrate!

Meidän sähljengillä oma bändi 

Like · Reply ·  1 · January 31 at 6:11pm

Our floorball team has its own band 

Common to the above comments is that they appear as irrational statements in the context. No other follower can relate to the comments, which might also be the reason why they were largely ignored by the Facebook community. Gasellit nevertheless noted both comments by liking them without commenting on the content any further. Interestingly, neither comment explicitly spells out the fandom to Gasellit but rather shows other followers lengths that go beyond fandom. In addition, an interesting feature in the comments is that they do not focus on Hätä-Miikka, as was the usual case with the comments that related to the original posts and addressed someone of the band by name. Instead, one comment targets Päkä using his real name Pekka. This particular comment is the only one throughout the observed six months that addressed someone of the band by his real name.

As mentioned, there was one additional comment that pointed out the commenter's personal relation to Päkä in the real world, but the comment related to the post where it was commented. However, it seems noteworthy that, altogether three comments pointed out commenters' personal relations to at least one of Gasellit, which shows the signs of a pattern, regardless of whether they related to the posts or not.

4.2.1.6 Requesting live shows

The second subcategory of comments that manifest fandom in a manner that do not necessarily relate to the posts of Gasellit concerns the handful of comments requesting live shows to the commenters' assumed hometowns. All in all, these comments were not remarkably common, and therefore, no major generalizations could be made about them. Although the comments are presented in the thesis mostly as unrelated to the posts, at

times these comments also related to the posts. They are placed here mainly because of the inconsistency in their occurrence. It even appears that the requests were commented on the posts that were the latest on Gasellit's timeline at the times of the comments. In addition, many notions of the locations of Gasellit's live shows are not presented in the form of a question, or are not explicitly directed to the band, as the followers exchange comments also with one another about the confirmed locations of upcoming live shows nearby them.

One interesting exception, the only indication of some kind of coherence is that one of the requests, "*Lpr oottaa... (Lpr [the city of Lappeenranta] is waiting...)*" was followed by "*Mikkeli odottaa myös! (Mikkeli is waiting as well!)*" The latter was even commented after Gasellit had replied to the former, which implies that it was posted because the commenter felt her voice will probably be heard. Gasellit noted the latter request, too, by liking it but did not reply to it with words. Incidentally, these two requests were commented on Gasellit's cover photo of upcoming live shows. Thus in this case, besides relating to one another, the comments actually related to Gasellit's original post as well.

No city or town was requested more than once during the observed six months, which may be a coincidence, but could not be completely ignored. The followers of Gasellit may refrain from requesting shows to their hometowns after seeing someone else requesting it, or they may simply come from different cities and towns.

4.2.2 Acknowledging Gasellit's success

The second category of Gasellit-related behaviors of the followers is acknowledging the success of the band. The most repetitive means to note the success include followers liking the posts of Gasellit that directly address the success, adapting and conforming the band's tone after announcing achievements, or simply congratulating Gasellit when compliments are in order. Building beyond the previous comments that manifest fandom,

these behaviors include expressions that do not take any position on the content of Gasellit's production or their likeability as musicians. Instead, the object of the observed engagement behaviors listed here is often expressly the success as such.

The observations of acknowledging Gasellit's success have been conducted on the basis of the likes and comments on Gasellit's posts that regarded their success. A total of eight posts met the conditions: four posts were about Gasellit informing they had won something, in two posts Gasellit asked their followers to vote for them in polls, and in two posts Gasellit communicated about their performance on the television show *SuomiLOVE*, which the community perceived as an accomplishment. The eight posts received 24 comments in total, 22 of which were posted by the followers and two by Gasellit.

4.2.2.1 Liking success posts

This first subcategory of the engagement behaviors of the followers that notify Gasellit's success concerns the amount of likes that have been given to the band's posts that deal with their success. The total number of likes of the eight post is 2.184. Two of the posts, Gasellit's entry after winning "the band of the year" award at Funky Awards 2015 and the post where they revealed their upcoming performance on the television show *SuomiLOVE*, received much more likes than the other posts, 1.010 and 567 respectively. The common feature of the two most liked success posts is that they include a photo of the band taken around the events. However, these photos are not official promotion material, but rather, Gasellit's own captions from the backstages posted exclusively to their followers on Facebook.

The other six posts dealing with the success of Gasellit have received only 607 likes in total, the highest amount being 174 likes for the post where they announced getting the single *Avokämmentä* in the playlist of the radio station YleX. Contrary to the two most liked posts, none of the other six has a photo of the band or any other reference to the real

lives of Gasellit. Instead, the posts that have received relatively few likes are all more or less occurring in the background, and, for instance, Gasellit did not have to physically move anywhere to make the posted things happen.

4.2.2.2 Adapting and conforming Gasellit's tone

The second subcategory of acknowledging Gasellit's success is about followers adapting and conforming the band's tone in the success posts. The comments of this subcategory can be further divided into two cases. Firstly, some of the comments adapted the mood of Gasellit and kept the atmosphere up through the commenters' own word choices. In a sense, these comments formed a natural continuum for the posts where they were commented on. Secondly, some of the commenters did not directly continue on the subject, but rather, reproduced the messages to one's acquaintances by simply tagging their names in comments. The analysis presented in this subsection focuses on the former, because the latter commenting is altogether common in the dataset of the whole research project, and will be discussed subsequently in the section 4.3.2. In all, four comments on Gasellit's posts that address their success adapted and conformed the band's tone in a manner that strengthened the atmosphere on the Facebook page.

The first two comments of this subcategory are presented below. These both were commented on the post where Gasellit requested the followers to vote their new song in the playlist of the radio station YleX. The comments celebrate Gasellit's clear lead in the vote in a manner that resonates with Gasellit's tone in the textual content of the post, as they asked the followers "to work together" to get the song in the playlist. For some reason, Gasellit did not acknowledge these comments by any means. Nevertheless, an interesting observation of these two comments is that, despite being ignored by Gasellit, they obviously relate to each other, which in turn implies that Gasellit succeeded in their aspiration of getting the followers to work together for the common goal.

Ukkelit on yli puolella jo etumatkassa 🍊🍊
Like · Reply · September 24, 2015 at 5:03pm

Guys are already in the lead by more than half 🍊🍊

Yep, kaulaa onku kiraffilla! 🦒
Like · Reply · September 24, 2015 at 10:21pm

Yep, the neck is like a giraffe's! 🦒

The third comment that adapts and conforms the tone of Gasellit is presented below. The comment was posted on the post where Gasellit celebrated the naming of *Seis* for the album of the week by the radio station YleX, and informed the followers that they can listen new songs in advance behind the given link. Although this comment does not directly address the success, it still conforms the tone of Gasellit as it names the song *Avokämmmentä* being one of the favorites of the commenter. Like the above two comments, this one implemented emojis to back up the commenter's emotional state, but unlike the above two comments, Gasellit noted this comment by liking it.

Avokämmmentä samantien yks lemppareista! 🗨️👍
Like · Reply · 1 · October 28, 2015 at 12:10am

Avokämmmentä (became) instantly one of my favorites! 🗨️👍

The fourth comment of adapting and conforming Gasellit's tone is presented below. The comment posted on the photo that Gasellit issued when they performed on the television show SuomiLOVE. Besides adapting the tone of Gasellit, the comment exploits a wide array of other common actions in the community, such as tagging other followers, use of emojis, and discussing Gasellit's upcoming live shows. The comment was liked by both Gasellit and the follower whose first name it tagged.

Eikä Janina joku kerkos käyttää mejän Suomilove+gasellit combon 🍷 voi juku, must see silti ! Myös must see turus also huome 🗨️
Like · Reply · 2 · January 21 at 7:36pm

No way Janina someone managed to use our Suomilove+gasellit combo 🍷 gee, must see anyways ! Also must see in (T)urku also tomorrow 🍷

Although there was not a significant amount of comments that represent the followers adapting and conforming the tone of Gasellit, the results of the votes that took place during the study imply that Gasellit provoked their followers successfully as they won all the

votes that were promoted on the Facebook page. In fact, the results of the votes specifically indicate that these posts of Gasellit did not go unnoticed despite the small amount of likes and comments they received.

4.2.2.3 Congratulating when needed

The third subcategory of the engagement behaviors of the followers which acknowledge the success of Gasellit is congratulating. Of the 22 comments that followers posted on Gasellit's success posts, six were considered congratulations, five being spelled-out congratulations and one being the ❤️-emoji as such. All the comments were posted on the photo where Gasellit both celebrated and announced their naming for the band of the year at Funky Awards 2015. The comments were:

Onnittelut 👍
Like · Reply · 1 · January 31 at 5:54pm

Congratulations 👍

Osoite oli kyllä oikea! 😊
Like · Reply · 1 · January 31 at 4:46pm

The address was indeed right! 😊

Onnea!
Like · Reply · 1 · January 31 at 4:08pm

Congrats!

❤️
Like · Reply · 1 · January 31 at 3:24pm

Totta ja onnea!! 🏆🏆🏆
Like · Reply · 1 · January 31 at 3:09pm

True and congrats!! 🏆🏆🏆

Hyvin ansaittu. Onnee kundit! 🙌
Like · Reply · 1 · January 31 at 2:44pm · Edited

Well deserved. Congrats guys! 🙌

As can be seen, these comments are genuine congratulations that differ from one another mostly by the exact wordings. Four of them use the word “congratulations” in some way, and while the other two do not implement that word, they seem to congratulate the band as well. All the comments have been liked by Gasellit, which implies that this is their way

of accepting the congratulations. In addition, four of the comments use emojis to strengthen the expression, whilst the emoji is the only expression in one comment. Interestingly, none of the emojis has been used by more than one commenter, which might be an anomaly as all the comments nevertheless celebrate the same accomplishment.

4.2.3 Joking around

The third category of Gasellit-related behaviors of the followers is joking around about the content of the posts. The two subcategories of this section include joking around by making funny remarks on what can be seen in the pictures and by using otherwise verbally inventive language. Altogether, the joking within the community shows the traits of two kinds of motivational drivers for one to start joking: out of the 42 comments that were jokes, 25 focused on amusing Gasellit, while the rest 17 comments were used to strengthen community ties. The former is discussed in this section whereas the latter is taken under consideration later in the section 4.3.1.

4.2.3.1 Basing on pictures

On several occasions the followers joked around in Gasellit's posts basing on the content of pictures. A total of 12 comments aimed at making funny remarks on what was visible to the naked eye. These comments were posted on six different pictures but two of the pictures clearly stood out from the others. The comments for the two are discussed in this subsection. Further, all 12 jokes of this subcategory were liked by Gasellit, although Gasellit did not comment on the jokes. However, the jokes were clearly approved by the band as the likes imply.

The most popular post of Gasellit in the sense of initiating the followers to make jokes about the content was the photo taken from Hätä-Miikka's grandmother's coffee table which was posted to Facebook on January 10, 2016 (in Figure 2). The picture received

10 comments in total, of which four linked both humor and the visual content of the picture. These comments are presented right after the picture.



Gasellit

January 10 · 🌐

paras taukopaikka joensuun ja helsingin välillä on hätiksen mummola!

(the best resting place between joensuu and helsinki is hätis' grandmother's home!)



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 You, [blue bar] [orange bar] and 891 others

Top Comments ▾

Figure 2. Gasellit's post from Hätä-Miikka's grandmother's place

In Figure 2 three members of Gasellit, from left to right; Musajusa, Päkä and Hätä-Miikka, are drinking coffee and eating buns in Hätä-Miikka's grandmother's place on the route between Joensuu and Helsinki. The four comments that were seen to apply Gasellit-oriented humor relating to the picture were:

██████████ Tärkeää käydä mummolassa.
Like · Reply · 👍 1 · January 10 at 4:36pm

It is important to visit grandma.

██████████ Ja pöydästä ei tietenkään nousta
ennen kuin kaikki on syöty.
Like · Reply · 👍 5 · January 10 at 4:59pm

And of course you won't leave the table before everything's been eaten.

██████████ Piimäkemut!! #vainmummolajutut
Like · Reply · 👍 2 · January 10 at 5:47pm · Edited

Buttermilk party!! #onlyatgrandmas

██████████ Pullapitko ja kaikki!
Like · Reply · 👍 2 · January 10 at 4:47pm

Plaited bun and everything!

The first two comments focus on the context of visiting one's grandparents. While the first one jokes around quite moderately, it exploits a widely used expression in the context of visiting grandparents, which makes the joke a satirical observation of the picture. The second comment implies another frequently used saying but also contains a reference to the table that is seen in the picture. The two subsequent comments both take into account one food particle from the picture: while the first comment of the latter two notices the buttermilk carton, the other comment mainly focuses on the plaited bun. In all, it is remarkable that three of the comments have been liked by other followers in addition to Gasellit.

The second most popular post of Gasellit that made the followers joke about the content of the picture, with three such comments, was posted on Sunday February 7, 2016 to Gasellit's Facebook page (see Figure 3). The picture is a capture from Hätä-Miikka's morning of the same day.

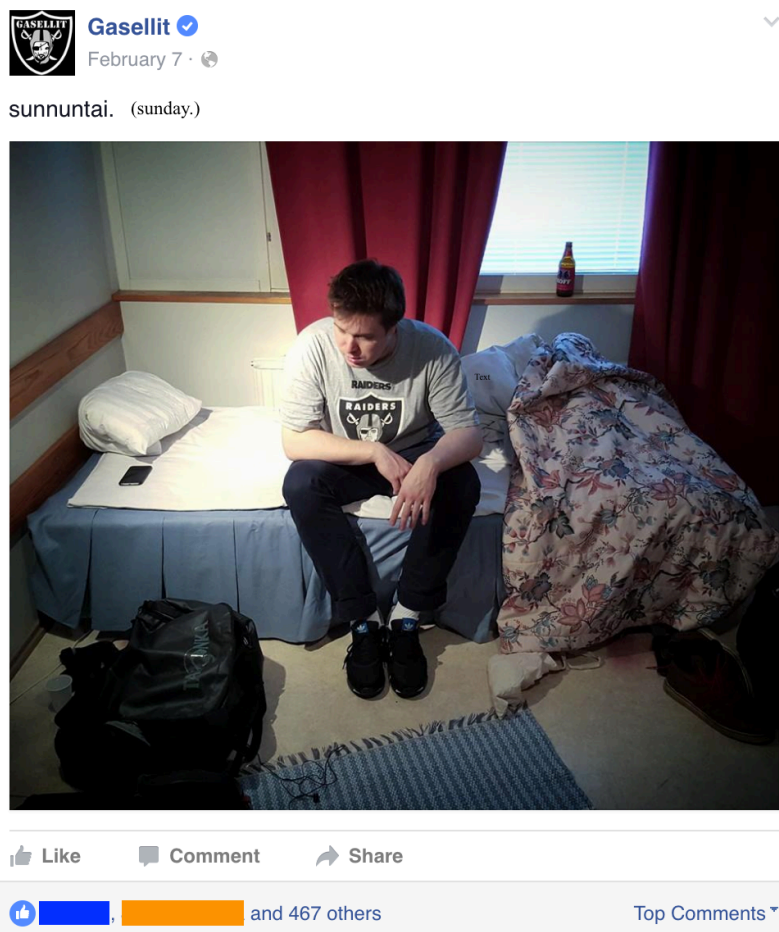


Figure 3. Gasellit's post where Hätä-Miikka is sitting on the bed

The three humorous comments on the picture presented in Figure 3 focus on the view. The first comment, "*Tää on iha Kaurismäkee (This is just like Kaurismäki.)*" refers to the Finnish filmmaker-brothers, Mika and Aki Kaurismäki, whose movies make use of simplified settings similarly to what is seen in the picture. The second comment, "*Siellä on pullo Koffiakin (There's one bottle of Koff.)*" focuses on the bottle on the window sill, which proves to be *Koff*, a Finnish lager brand manufactured by Sinebrychoff. Finally, the third comment is a quotation, "*'Mut siis se darra...' ('But so that hangover...')*" which connects the bottle of *Koff* with the ambience of the picture, assuming that Hätä-Miikka is suffering from a hangover. Although none of these comments builds on the tiredness of Hätä-Miikka nor makes clear jokes, considering the content of the picture,

the followers are nevertheless sharing the moment with Hätä-Miikka while cultivating black humor.

4.2.3.2 Being verbally inventive

The other part of joking around that was directed at Gasellit concerns the comments that use verbally inventive language, such as metaphors, or lean in some other way on commenters' textual presentations rather than on finding amusing details from the posts. Specifically, 13 jokes that were verbally inventive were commented on 12 different posts. Examples of these include "*kontrol (control)*", commented on the picture where Thube Hefner carries alcoholic beverages with him and "*Oisitte käyttäny kumii 😊 (You should've used protection 😊)*", commented on the post where Gasellit announced their "infant's due date", implying the release date of the album *Seis*.

The jokes of this subcategory faced slightly different reception from Gasellit than the previous jokes that built on the content of the pictures. Whereas only eight of the 13 comments were liked by Gasellit, the band commented on three jokes. Two comments were both liked and commented by Gasellit, but three comments were not noted at all. These figures are interesting as they imply that, while some jokes were particularly successful, Gasellit did not necessarily find all of the jokes amusing.

Verbally inventive joking that was clearly aimed at Gasellit was altogether fragmented as regards to what kinds of posts generated such joking the most. The jokes were commented, often by one follower at a time, on all kinds of posts: Gasellit's pictures, links to external sites, and on posts related to the promotion of the album *Seis*.

4.3 COMMUNITY-RELATED BEHAVIORS

This subchapter will present community-related engagement behaviors of the followers of Gasellit. These do overlap to some extent with the previous Gasellit-related behaviors, as some comments embody both behaviors at the same time. Nevertheless, the followers clearly have their own agenda, repetitive patterns, that also strengthens the community ties. The community-related engagement behaviors are classified into three categories (see Table 4). The first category comprises frequent inside jokes of the community. This category is divided into two subcategories. The second category is about tagging and commenting with other followers. The third category, in turn, covers the followers advocating one another. This last category includes two subcategories.

Table 4. Community-related behaviors

Inside jokes	Community expressions
	Using song titles
Tagging and commenting with others	
Advocating	New production related to the album Seis
	Upcoming live shows
	Fan apparel

Table 4 illustrates the community-related behaviors of the followers of Gasellit. As seen, while two of the main categories have specific engagement behaviors linked to them, one main category is comprehensive as such. The behaviors of Table 4 are discussed next over the following three sections.

4.3.1 Inside jokes

The first category of community-related behaviors of the followers is the frequent use of inside jokes. In many ways, these jokes are a continuum for the previously examined humor that was directed to Gasellit (section 4.2.3), the main difference being that, some jokes were reproduced several times by the followers. The most repetitive jokes were often equivalent to jargon, or community language, which the followers obviously valued. In all, 17 out of 42 jokes are considered inside jokes. The two subcategories of inside joking include common community expressions that the followers reproduced, and the use of Gasellit's song titles whenever the followers regarded them as suitable for the post on which they were commented.

4.3.1.1 Community expressions

Two expressions were used on such many occasions in the Facebook community that they clearly had meaning for the followers as such. More precisely, the expressions "*Very nice*" and "*Can't wait*", as stated expressly in English, were used more often than any other wordings or word pairs. Every time the two were applied, no other words were included in the comments. However, roughly half of the comments that used the expressions combined the textual content with an emoji.

The expression "*Very nice*" was stated three times without emojis by the followers. All these comments came to different posts. One additional time a shortened version of the expression, "*Nice!* 😊", was posted on the picture where Gasellit celebrated their naming for the band of the year at Funky Awards 2015. Although the comment can be interpreted as a congratulation for Gasellit, it also creates value for the community by reproducing the common expression.

The other frequent expression "*Can't wait*" was posted three times by the followers. All the comments included an exclamation mark at the end of the expression. Furthermore,

one comment was without emojis or smileys, one used the ❤️-emoji, while one applied the 🍌-emoji. As was the case with the previous expression, “*Can’t wait*” was never commented more than once on a post. In fact, the two expressions can appear almost any time to any post, the only certain thing being that, occasionally, someone will reproduce the expressions.

Gasellit confirmed in the interview that the expressions originate from their own use. They were even amused over the fact that once they “get some saying out of their minds”, the followers start to reproduce it. Hence, even though the followers absorb the expressions directly from Gasellit, it is never Gasellit’s ultimate intention. Rather, they only “happen to use” all kinds of expressions in their daily lives and some expressions might “take-off from that.” In any case, the observation that the discussed two community expressions originate from the band’s use indicates that Gasellit can impact on the community practices.

4.3.1.2 Using song titles

The second subcategory of the inside jokes that strengthen community ties is about the followers’ frequent use of Gasellit’s song titles in the comments. A total of 12 comments of the whole dataset mentioned one song title in some way. Two of the comments did not seem to aim at any humor, but rather spelled out the commenters’ identification with particular songs. Compared with the other ten comments, these two were also longer in length. Furthermore, two of the remaining ten comments were commented by a non-native Finnish speaker who did not succeed in the jokes due to the apparent language barrier. These two comments are nevertheless considered as inside jokes because the commenter clearly intended to strengthen the community ties in the same way as he had seen others doing.

Of the ten comments that jokingly used Gasellit’s song titles, three comments addressed songs from the new album *Seis*. The song *Mahtuuko kyytiin?* (*Is there room for picking*

up?) was commented two times: “Mahtuuko kyytiin Oulusta? (Is there room for picking up from Oulu?)” and “Jos otatte kyytiin 🥰🥰 (If you pick me up 🥰🥰)”, and the song *Seitti (The Web)* was mentioned one time in a simple comment reproducing the title: “seitti (web.)” The former two were commented on two separate posts that dealt with Gasellit’s live shows, and the latter one was commented on the photo taken from Hätä-Miikka’s grandmother’s place.

Five of the other seven comments spread evenly between Gasellit’s other albums and were posted to separate entries. The comments were: “Jäniksen vuosi? 🐰🐰 (The Year of the Hare? 🐰🐰)”, “Vähä kujilla (Little confused [Kuja kutsuu, Alley invites])”, “Ahtaalla? (In desperate straits?)”, “Kiittämätön nilkki ❤️ (Ungrateful bastard ❤️), “Imu huillu !! ❤️ [sic] (Suck a flute !! ❤️.)” The latter two comments were commented by the non-native Finnish speaker mentioned previously. Both his comments were even rude in the context: the first comment was posted to the picture from Hätä-Miikka’s grandmother’s place, and the second comment to the picture taken from the backstage of the television show SuomiLOVE. However, Gasellit told in the interview that they appreciate the commenter’s enthusiasm despite the language barrier.

The remaining two comments of using song titles to amuse other followers mentioned Thube Hefner’s solo song *Khyä (Yes)* which features Hätä-Miikka and is produced by Musajusa. These two comments stated only the title of the song as such.

4.3.2 Tagging and commenting with others

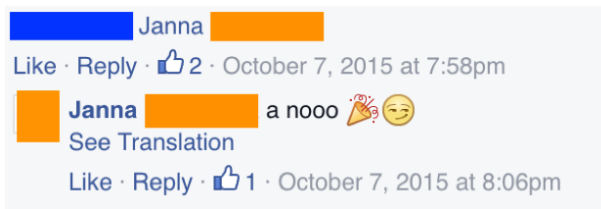
The second category of community-related behaviors is tagging and commenting with other followers in the commenting fields of the posts. Although every tag does not initiate a conversation, short discussions between two followers usually start by one tagging the other.

There were altogether 36 tags made by the followers: other followers were tagged 35 times and Gasellit was tagged once. The most common cause for the followers to start tagging one another is the new album with 17 tags. The two most tagged posts were the teaser video for the single *Vainoharhainen* and the release of the music video for the single *Betoni-intiaani*, which both gained six tags. In contrast, the post where Gasellit announced they had released both singles received only two tags. The remaining three tags came to posts that addressed the album as a whole: the post in which Gasellit revealed the album's cover art gained two tags, whilst the actual release of the album was tagged once. At first, it seems illogical that the release of the album fell well short of the release of its two singles. However, the difference in the number of tags implies that videos may activate more tagging than Gasellit's other means of promotion.

The second main reason for the follower tags is Gasellit's upcoming live shows, which were tagged 12 times. These tags are common in Gasellit's cover photo updates which they use to inform about the dates of upcoming live shows. Thus, the followers tag each other to hint about shows near them.

The third cause for the followers to tag other followers, with six tags in total, is content they believe might interest the other. These tags were posted to six different posts which did not have significant similarities as regards the workings of Gasellit. However, the tags of suggesting content to others prove that the followers have generally adopted the feature of Facebook.

Every now and then the tags initiated short discussions between two followers in the commenting fields of the posts. In virtually every conversation, the tagged follower continued on the matter in which he or she had been included. This often made the conversations seem as the followers' way of celebrating something. An example of such is:



As seen, the above discussion starts when one follower tags the other. Besides the two sharing the state of mind, they have liked each other's comments which add value to the discussion. Also in this case, Gasellit took part in the discussion by liking the first comment.

4.3.3 Advocating

The final category of community-related behaviors of the followers is advocating other followers. The comments of this category point to instances where the followers say out loud what they are doing at the moment or what they are going to do in the future. In all, 25 comments manifested this kind of behavior. The most common object that initiated the followers to advocate one another was the new production related to the album *Seis*, which gained 16 such comments. The second most advocated topic was the band's upcoming live shows with six comments. The third advocated matter was Gasellit's fan apparel with three comments.

4.3.3.1 New production related to the album *Seis*

A vast majority of the advocative comments of the followers regards the 16 comments advocating Gasellit's new production related to the album *Seis*. Outstandingly, ten of these comments were commented on the post Gasellit issued on the release date of the album announcing it to be out (Figure 4). Gasellit artfully start the post by shouting "*seis! (stop!)*" which is not only the name of the album but also an effective way of getting the followers' attention. The post includes also a link which takes one to listen to the album.



Figure 4. Gasellit's post on the release of Seis

Examples of the ten advocative comments of the post illustrated in Figure 4 include: “*Aivan loistava levy!! Kiitoksia jälleen kerran loistavista biiseistä! Avokämmmentä ehdottomasti yks lemppareista 🙌😊 (Truly an amazing album! Thanks once again for amazing songs! Avokämmmentä absolutely one of the favorites 🙌😊)*” and “*Tykkään lujaa! (I like it strongly!)*” The former comment was liked remarkable five times – four times by the other followers and once by Gasellit. As the number of likes imply, the followers clearly monitor each other’s comments on the page. Besides the previous two, eight other comments on the post were advocative: some of these addressed particular songs, whereas the

others praised the whole album. Thus, on the basis of the ten comments, the followers received the album positively.

The other six comments advocating the album *Seis* were posted elsewhere. For instance, the teaser video for the single *Vainoharhainen* received one comment, “*Odotan innolla 🥰🎵👍 (I am eagerly waiting 🥰🎵👍).*” A similar one was also commented on the post where Gasellit promoted their album to be released the day after tomorrow. Furthermore, two elsewhere posted comments concerned purchasing the album, “*ennakkotilattu’d [sic] (pre-ordered’d)*” or intention to purchase it, “*Mulle käy. Lp yeah. (Fine for me. Lp yeah).*” The remaining two comments in turn praised the music of the album: “*Avokämmmentä samantien yks lemppareista! 🗨️👍 (Avokämmmentä [became] instantly one of my favorites! 🗨️👍)*” and “*Todella hyvä levy!! (Truly a good album!!)*”

An interesting feature of the latter six comments is that while all the comments were liked by Gasellit, no other follower noted them in any way. That being said, the comments were not randomly posted but they were commented on Gasellit’s posts that addressed the new album, which implies that Gasellit can evoke such commenting. The observation is also aligned with the timeline of Gasellit’s posts related to the new album: all the 16 comments addressed in this subsection were chronologically the first 16 comments of the 25 that fall into the advocating category.

Finally, it is noticeable that all the comments presented here are favorable to *Seis* and often apply emojis to strengthen expressions, suggesting that the followers are more likely to use emojis when their emotions are particularly strong and/or positive. However, this does not apply only to the use of emojis; exclamation marks are also somewhat common in positive comments.

4.3.3.2 Upcoming live shows

The second subcategory of comments where the followers advocate others concerns the six comments that addressed Gasellit's upcoming live shows. In a sense, the commenters of these comments wanted to make it clear for other followers that they are attending a particular live show. Two of the six comments included also tags made by the followers.

Interestingly, three of the six comments were commented on the post where Gasellit informed the followers about their performance on the television show SuomiLOVE. Thus, instead of focusing on the performance, the comments grabbed a hold of Gasellit's additional portion of the text, the upcoming show at Klubi in Turku, which was written in connection with the photo. The comments were: "*Eikä Janina joku kerkes käyttää mejän Suomilove+gasellit combon ❤️ voi juku, must see silti ! Myös must see turus also huome 🙌 (No way Janina someone managed to use our Suomilove+gasellit combo ❤️ gee, must see anyways! Also must see in turku also tomorrow 🙌)*", presented already in the subsection 4.2.2.2, "*Kai vedätte Khyä! biisin Klubilla? Meitsi tulee kuuntelee! 😊 (Please tell me you are going to perform Khyä-song in Klubi? I'm coming to listen! 😊)*", and finally, "*Näky Klubil! 🤔👉 (See you in Klubi! 🤔👉).*"

Besides the previous, three other comments posted to three different posts were purely expectant for the upcoming shows in the commenters' hometowns: "*Innolla Lahden keikkaa ootellen (Eagerly waiting for Lahti's show)*", "*Arvaa mihin mennään torstaina? Katja (Guess where we are going on Thursday? Katja)*", and "*Onneks tuutte hämptonii. Kerran ootte kai suistol käyny aikasemmin ja missasin sillan. (Fortunately, you're going to hämpton [the city of Hämeenlinna.] Apparently once you have been in suisto before and I missed it then.)*" The first one appeared in the post where Gasellit provided a link for the music video for *Betoni-intiaani* on YouTube. The latter two were commented on two separate posts regarding Gasellit's upcoming live shows.

Although the comments of this subcategory related to the initial posts of Gasellit, the connection was less obvious than it was in the previously discussed subcategory which concerned the new production to the album *Seis*. More precisely, the three comments on the post about Gasellit's performance on SuomiLOVE steered away from the performance which was being discussed by everyone else in the comments. Still, it seems that Gasellit caused the interfere themselves by offering another topic to be discussed. This once again indicates that Gasellit can impact on the discussions in the community.

4.3.3.3 Fan apparel

The third and final subcategory of comments where the followers advocate other followers is about the three comments addressing Gasellit's fan apparel. It is remarkable that, during the observed six months, Gasellit posted only two posts regarding their official fan apparel, which both initiated advocative commenting.

One comment was posted to the photo where Gasellit illustrated how the new batch of fan apparel has arrived, as Musajusa was shown to carry many clothes with him, "*Saisiko kokoja 5XL asti menis varmasti myydyks ja mulle ensimmäisenä?* 🤔👉🔥 (Can one get sizes all the way to 5XL I bet they would certainly be sold and foremost for me? 🤔👉🔥.)" Gasellit noted the comment by liking it, implying that one can certainly get clothes in the requested size, which made the commenter's request helpful for others of the same size.

The other two comments about fan apparel were commented on the post where Hätä-Miikka and Päkä were shown to wear Gasellit's college and hoodie. In the text that was written in connection with the photo Gasellit confirmed the content of photo, "*dodi! uutta gaselli-collegea ja -hupparia (now! new gaselli-colleges and -hoodies)*" and offered a link for purchasing the shirts. The first comment of the post, "*Tilasin just hupparin, college ja pipo jo löytyy ki* 😊 (Just ordered a hoodie, already have a college and beanie 😊)", has been liked by two followers in addition to Gasellit. The second comment,

“Kolme kappaletta M-koon huppareita Roomaan kotiinkuljetettuna, kiitos! (Three pieces of M-sized hoodies delivered to home in Rome, please!)”, has been liked by one follower besides Gasellit.

In all, the followers use advocative comments for helping other followers. However, they often promote Gasellit discreetly, as the comments focus on the commenter rather than on the issue that is being advocated in the process.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter summarizes the study, discusses its findings and draws conclusions. Furthermore, theoretical and practical implications are presented. The chapter ends with a review on limitations of the study and provides suggestions for further research.

5.1 RESEARCH SUMMARY

This study explored how customer engagement manifested on the Facebook page of a Finnish rap-quartet Gasellit. The context of the research project was the release of Gasellit's new album, *Seis*, and the band's use of Facebook for promoting the album. By focusing specifically on how Gasellit and their followers negotiate customer engagement on Facebook, this study also aimed to analyze the general community practices occurring on the page. The study was motivated by the general lack of research on musicians utilizing Facebook for promotional purposes as well as generating customer engagement.

The general research problem for which the present study sought to answer was, "*How is customer engagement negotiated between the human brand Gasellit and their followers on the band's Facebook page?*" This study also formulated one more specific research question for investigating the negotiation, "*How do followers manifest their engagement on Gasellit's Facebook page?*" Through the research question, the study aimed to analyze the general community activities, but also to provide case-specific practical implications as regards how Gasellit can affect their followers.

The literature review of the study discussed relevant research for the phenomenon from both ends of the customer engagement process. Firstly, Gasellit's end was discussed through earlier research on branding work, focusing especially on human brands. The branding work literature showed the importance of brand identity and positioning in the case of human brands. Secondly, customer engagement literature was reviewed in order

to understand the customer engagement manifested on Gasellit's Facebook page. Important factors for such engagement were drawn from the central characteristics of service-dominant (S-D) logic; value co-creation, customer-orientation and relational business practices, and from the customer engagement literature which maintains that engagement is a behavioral, noticeable state, that is enhanced through customers' interactive experiences in service relationships.

The methodology chapter presented the method of netnography, used in studying online communities, which the thesis applied to the online observation conducted on Gasellit's Facebook page. The research data consisted of 68 entries Gasellit posted to their Facebook page during the six-month observation period from September 2015 to February 2016, and all the follower activity the entries generated in terms of likes, comments and shares. The online observation was supported by a semi-structured interview with Gasellit, which aimed to gain a deep understanding on how the band utilizes Facebook and how the followers generally behave.

The main finding of the study was that the followers manifested their engagement with Gasellit through behaviors that were either Gasellit- or community-related. Moreover, the findings indicate the interactive nature of customer engagement which is negotiated between the human brand Gasellit, who posted the entries which initiated the engagement (Brodie et al., 2011; Verhoef et al., 2010), and the followers, who reacted to the entries in various ways showing the co-creative nature of value creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Next, the main findings will be discussed in more detail reflecting on previous studies.

5.2 MAIN FINDINGS

An illustration of the findings of the study is presented in Figure 5, which shows how customer engagement was manifested on Gasellit's Facebook page during the observation period of the study.

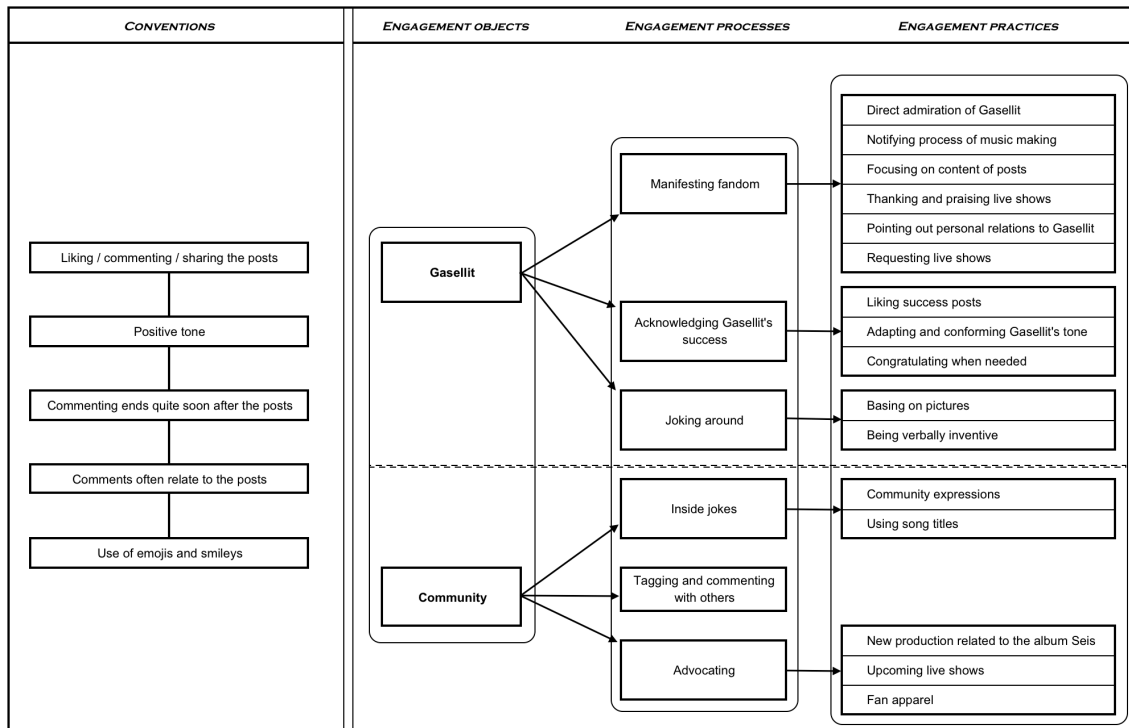


Figure 5. Customer engagement on Gasellit's Facebook page

The findings of the study (Figure 5) demonstrate that customer engagement manifested on Gasellit's Facebook page is four-fold. Firstly, the community practices on the page made use of several conventions that were generally applied by the followers. Secondly, the engagement of the followers centralized on two engagement objects – Gasellit and the community. Thirdly, the engagement objects initiated six engagement processes, of which three focused on Gasellit and three on the community, and lastly, the engagement processes included 16 specific engagement practices. Next, the themes of Figure 5 are discussed in more detail.

The customer engagement manifested on Gasellit's Facebook page exploited five *conventions*, which is in line with earlier research on virtual communities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Schau et al., 2009). The five conventions of the study were liking / commenting / sharing the posts, positive tone in comments, commenting ended quite soon

after the initial posts, but the comments often related to the posts, and finally, many comments used emojis and smileys to back up textual expressions. Through these conventions, Gasellit's followers demonstrate how established engagement processes and practices are conveyed in the community.

The most distinguishing feature of the conventions is that of the 199 comments posted by the followers only two were negative in tone, which both resonates with the notion of Higgins and Scholer (2009) that engagement can be either positive or negative, but also demonstrates that negative engagement was remarkably rare in the present study. Furthermore, as the comments of the followers often related to the initial posts, the band clearly affected on what was discussed in the community. This indicates that the followers identify with the human brand Gasellit (Fournier, 1998; Thomson, 2006) through interactive experiences (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008; Brodie et al., 2011; Brodie et al., 2013).

The engagement of the followers centralized on two *engagement objects*. Firstly, half of the engagement behaviors fixated on Gasellit; the people who form the brand (King, 1991; Fournier, 1998; Thomson, 2006). Moreover, Gasellit strengthened the followers' engagement with them by posting content that was both authentic (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, 2012) and otherwise valued by the followers (Thomson, 2006). Secondly, half of the engagement behaviors focused on the community, and thus, showed the traits of communality (Schau et al., 2009). However, as previous research suggests (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002), also the findings of this study indicate that even the community-related behaviors originate from the followers' shared object of interest, the music band Gasellit.

The followers created value in the community through six *engagement processes* and 16 specific *engagement practices*, which corresponds with previous studies on virtual communities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Schau et al., 2009). The first three processes centralized on the engagement object of Gasellit. Through these processes, the followers strengthened their fandom to Gasellit, similarly to what is suggested by Fournier (1998),

but also kept the atmosphere good in the community by acknowledging the band's success (Schau et al., 2009) and joking around in the entries (Kozinets, 1997). The Gasellit-related engagement processes were manifested through 11 engagement practices. The majority of the practices were based on manifesting one's fandom to Gasellit, which the band maintained by posting interesting content to the page, such as pictures exclusive to Facebook (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, 2012), and links to their music videos and album reviews from across the web (Thomson, 2006). In addition, Gasellit strengthened the engagement by replying and/or liking the comments of the followers (Khobzi & Teimourpour, 2015). These findings embody how Gasellit and the followers co-create value on the band's Facebook page in the same way as S-D logic proposes (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008).

The other three engagement processes, including five engagement practices, focused on the community per se. Firstly, and in line with Kozinets (1997), the followers joked with other members in the community by reproducing Gasellit's song titles and two community expressions. The joking also complies with Bagozzi and Dholakia's (2002) view on shared language, or jargon, used in many virtual communities. Secondly, the followers tagged and commented with one another in the entries Gasellit posted, demonstrating how word-of-mouth spreads in the virtual community (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Thirdly, the followers advocated other followers about Gasellit-related matters, such as the new production related to the album *Seis* and fan apparel. The advocacy indicates that the followers reinforce Gasellit's offerings on Facebook when they are strongly attached to the human brand of Gasellit (Thomson, 2006). The findings specifically suggest that Gasellit can enhance the followers' sense of communality on Facebook by posting updates on their schedule of releasing new music and on the dates of upcoming live shows.

5.2.1 Theoretical implications

This study adopts a novel approach to investigating the branding work of musicians for initiating customer engagement on social media. To date, studies on the customer engagement of human brands have addressed the branding work of professional sport clubs and politicians, leaving musicians out of the review.

Further, the study contributes to customer engagement literature by illuminating how a human brand and its followers negotiate customer engagement on Facebook. The findings of the study indicate that customer engagement in the context of a Facebook brand page is versatile wholeness wherein engagement processes intertwine with engagement practices (Brodie et al., 2013). By focusing on the communications of the focal human brand, the study maintains that followers must be attached to the human brand in order to manifest their engagement (Verhoef et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2011).

Specifically, the study shows evidence of the interactive nature of service relationships (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Although the interactions with the focal human brand are the most valuable for followers (Fournier, 1998; Thomson, 2006), they also have relationships with other followers in the community.

Finally, this study adds to the investigations of customer engagement and engagement process by showing how value is co-created in the community. While previous approaches have examined customer-to-customer interactions in virtual communities (Kozinets, 1997; Schau et al., 2009; Gummerus et al., 2012; Brodie et al., 2013), the present study explores company-to-customer interactions. However, the findings of this study reveal that value is co-created in the case community in much the same way as the previous approaches suggest; through conventions, engagement processes and engagement practices.

5.2.2 Practical implications

The findings of the study imply that the human brand Gasellit can generate customer engagement by posting relevant and interesting content to their Facebook page. Especially, the followers of Gasellit appreciate content that is exclusive to Facebook and directly refers to the real lives of Gasellit, such as pictures of some particular moment. Moreover, the findings indicate that Gasellit should interact with the followers directly, transmitting an authentic image of them, by addressing the comments of the followers in some way. In addition, the followers value that Gasellit keep them updated on their schedule of releasing new music as well as share the greatest moments of their lives with the community, for instance, through reports on their success. Finally, this study maintains that the followers appreciate diverse and proactive communications from the Gasellit-brand. Although the humane element of the brand is often perhaps the most important factor for the followers, they also need an easy access to Gasellit-related information, such as the dates of upcoming live shows and links for purchasing.

5.3 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study had several limitations that must be taken into account. Moreover, the study revealed how customer engagement is manifested on the Facebook page of the human brand Gasellit, which makes the study highly context-dependent. The findings are derived from a music band that both performs and communicates only in Finnish and in Finland. Likewise, the results might be different if similar research projects were to be conducted in completely different cultural environments. For establishing such credibility, it is suggested that the phenomenon would be studied in other cultures, and ultimately, even cross-culturally.

An additional limitation of the study is that it interviewed only the human brand with which followers engaged on Facebook. For future studies, it is recommended that similar interviews would be conducted also with followers, the consumers who are engaging, in order to gain insightful views on what initiates their engagement in the first place. Additionally, interviews could also be conducted in focus groups consisting of human brands and their followers to better understand how the customer engagement is negotiated between the two parties.

Further, the study focused only on Gasellit's use of Facebook for initiating customer engagement leaving other social media sites out of the examination. In the future, it would be valuable to analyze how customers manifest their engagement with human brands on different social media sites, and, whether the engagement is dependable on the chosen social media. In addition, more research projects are needed to examine how human brands utilize and integrate different social media for customer communications.

Finally, future studies on different music groups, representing different genres, could also take up this agenda and investigate the customer engagement dynamics vis-à-vis different audiences. Also, it would be valuable to examine what the exact means are for other musicians to generate and maintain customer engagement in various contexts.

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